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edited by

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THE PHEASANT

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GOOD BEAT SPOILED BY FOX

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BY THE REV. H. A. MACPHERSON

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BY A. J. STUART-WORTLEY

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'WITH INTENT TO COMMIT A FELONY'

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY A. THORBURN

SECOND EDITION

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO
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PREFACE

THE design of the *Fur and Feather Series* is to present monographs, as complete as they can possibly be made, on the various English birds and beasts which are generally included under the head of Game.

Books on Natural History cover such a vast number of subjects that their writers necessarily find it impossible to deal with each in a really comprehensive manner; and it is not within the scope of such works exhaustively to discuss the animals described, in the light of objects of sport. Books on sport, again, seldom treat at length of the Natural History of the furred and feathered creatures which are shot or otherwise taken; and, so far as the Editor is aware, in no book hitherto published on Natural History or Sport has information been given as to the best methods of turning the contents of the bag to account.

Each volume of the present Series will, therefore, be devoted to a bird or beast, and will be divided into three parts. The Natural History of the variety will first be given; it will then be considered from the point of view of sport; and the writer of the third division will assume that the creature has been carried to the larder, and will proceed to discuss it gastronomically. The origin of the animals will be traced, their birth and breeding described, every known method of circumventing and killing them—not omitting the methods employed by the poacher—will be explained with special regard to modern developments, and they will only be left when on the table in the most appetising forms which the delicate science of cookery has discovered.

It is intended to make the illustrations a prominent feature in the Series. The pictures in the present volume are after drawings by Mr. A. Thorburn, all of which, including the diagrams, have been arranged under the supervision of Mr. A. J. Stuart-Wortley.

ALFRED E. T. WATSON.

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BY THE REV. H. A. MACPHERSON

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Suggested and revised by A. J. STUART-WORTLEY

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NATURAL HISTORY OF THE PHEASANT

BY THE

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CHAPTER I

THE PHEASANT IN HISTORY

THE acclimatisation of beautiful or useful birds has long exercised the ingenuity of men of divers races. The old Greeks and Romans in particular bestowed great pains upon procuring rare and delicate birds to grace their menageries and poultry yards. Of game birds the peacock was a prime favourite; but the pheasant was also held in high esteem. 'O quanto noi dobbiamo d'obligo a gli Argonauti!' exclaims Raimondi of Brescia; whether or not Jason and his heroes introduced this bird to civilisation, there can be no doubt that it was first carried to the shores of Southern Greece from the flat, forest-covered plains of the river Phasis, the modern Rion. That it was so is a matter for surprise; because this species might apparently have been procured then, as now, from the coverts of Mount Olympus or the Saronic Gulf; but the evidence of a crowd of classical writers, to each of which I have taken the trouble to refer, convinces

me that Martial was correctly informed when he wrote the well-known couplet,

> Argiva primum sum transportata carina ;
> Ante mihi notum nil nisi Phasis erat.[1]

The popularity which the pheasant enjoyed as an article of luxury passed into a proverb : 'Not if you would give me the pheasants which Leogoras rears.' Ptolemæus Euergetes, in describing the animals kept at the palace in Alexandria, took occasion to remark upon the tasty character of the flesh of the pheasant. During the later years of the Empire, Roman epicures vied with one another in the variety and costliness of their banquets, which were furnished with pheasants reared by contractors or supplied by their own country estates. Nor were the barbarians of the North slow to appreciate the good judgment of classical taste on the score of a roast pheasant. Alexander Neckam has worthily celebrated the esteem which the pheasant enjoyed in Britain during the reign of his foster-brother, Richard Cœur-de-Lion. I venture to think that his lines deserve to be better known than they are :

> In prima specie carnem quod judice luxu
> Judicat, ipse sapor phasidos ales habet.
> Deliciosus honos mensæ, jocunda palati
> Gloria, vix stomacho gratior hospes adest.[2]

[1] Lib. xiii. Epig. lxxii.

[2] *De Laudibus Divinæ Sapientiæ*, p. 383.

Polydore Vergil (who was sent to England by Pope Alexander VI.), after many years' residence in this country, published a History of England in 1533. We learn from this distinguished Italian that 'the cheefe food of the Englishemen consisteth in flesh. . . . They have an infinite nomber of birdes, as well fostered in the howse as breeding in their woodds. . . . Of wilde burdes these are most delicate, partiches, pheasaunts, quayles, owsels, thrusshes, and larckes.'[1]

About a century later Gervase Markham passed upon the pheasant the following encomium: 'In the first rank I will place the Pheasant, as being indeed a Byrd of singular beauty, excellent in the pleasure of her flight, and as rare as any Byrd whatsoever that flies, when she is in the dish, and well cookt by a skilfull and an ingenious workman.'[2]

Here it may be remarked that the pheasants which crow to-day in our home coverts, while no doubt remote descendants of those upon which the enthusiastic fowler was pleased to pass the verdict just recorded, are *not*, as a rule, thoroughbred. It would be more accurate to say that they are the result of a

[1] *History of England*, book i. p. 23.
[2] *Hunger's Prevention; or, the Art of Fowling*, p. 199.

cross between the pheasant of the Caucasus and the Siberian or Ring-necked Pheasant of China. The latter bird is extremely handsome, but quite unknown to the majority of Englishmen; for we should make a great mistake if we regarded the ring-necked pheasants seen in this country as typical Chinese pheasants. This point will be more easily understood if we try to follow a short statement of the distribution of the pheasant and its allies. I have noticed that even ornithologists sometimes talk about *the* pheasant to which we usually apply that term, I mean *Phasianus colchicus*, as though it were confined to the forests and marshes which fringe the shallow and slimy waters of the slow-flowing Phasis or Rion. My friend Mr. W. H. Stuart, of Batoum, who has taken a great deal of trouble to procure the most recent information about the pheasants of the Black Sea, informs me that this species exists in many parts of the Caucasus. It frequents low-lying localities, notably those in the neighbourhood of the rivers Rion and Hura; but it is generally to be found in suitable spots. Its eastern range extends into Transcaucasia, while it reaches the Volga in a northerly direction. Mr. Ogilvie Grant defines the range of this wild pheasant as embracing Southern Turkey, Greece and the North of Asia Minor, as well as the Caucasus. He catalogues

between forty and fifty specimens as existing in the National Collection, obtained in many localities, from Bohemia and the Gulf of Salonica to the Caucasus.[1]

It is to be regretted that our National Collection seems to possess no pheasants from the island of Corsica. I think we may say that Professor Giglioli almost re-discovered the pheasant in Corsica. He, at any rate, was the first to inform me that wild pheasants existed on that island; in proof of which he produced a fine male and female which he had received from Corsica. Now, how the pheasant first reached Corsica is a very curious problem. It is conceivable that the original stock may have been introduced by some Roman officer in the days of the Empire. Professor Giglioli considers that the pheasant is as much indigenous to Europe as to the swamps of the Caucasus; *à propos* of which, he tells us that it 'is at the present time to be found in abundance upon the frontier of Dalmatia. It also frequents the woods which fringe the mouth of the river Drino in Albania, to which it certainly cannot have been introduced by any human agency.[2]

There is documentary evidence that pheasants have been found in Corsica since 1531; indeed, one

[1] *Catalogue of Birds*, vol. xxii. p. 322.

[2] *Avifauna Italica*, vol. i. p. 336.

would naturally imagine that they had existed there since classical times. It is to be regretted that these Corsican pheasants are becoming rare, in consequence of the persecution to which they are subjected. The Italian Consul-General informed Professor Giglioli in 1881 that from a hundred and fifty to two hundred birds were killed in the canton of Ghisoni annually. It is impossible to suppose that the pheasant reached Corsica in the first instance by a voluntary migration across the sea from Italy; but that the pheasants of that island are pure-bred examples of *Phasianus colchicus* may be affirmed without fear of contradiction. Thus the present range of this bird in a truly wild state extends from Corsica eastward into Transcaucasia. Mr. Henry Seebohm contributed to the 'Ibis' an excellent essay on *Phasianus torquatus* and its allies, in the course of which he remarks that the Siberian or Ring-necked Pheasant (*Phasianus torquatus*) and its allies are only found east of the meridian of Calcutta. They differ from the Common Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) and its allies, which are only found west of the meridian of Calcutta, in the following particulars: The predominant colour of the rump and upper tail coverts of the ring-necked group of pheasants is green, instead of red, as in the Western birds; secondly, the ring-necked birds have the wing coverts lavender-grey

instead of white or red. Of the seven pheasants which Seebohm classes together as races of the Siberian Pheasant (*Phasianus torquatus*), the most widely distributed is the typical ring-necked bird, the range of which extends from the Lower Amoor, through Manchuria, to Eastern China, where it is found as far south as Chang-shi and Canton. 'It is easily diagnosed by two characters—neck with a white ring round it, and flank feathers buff, with the usual black tips. As might be expected from its wide range, it varies somewhat in colour in different localities. Examples from the Corea have the ground colour of the mantle and flanks a paler buff than usual, but they do not approach *P. formosanus* in having any wider dark margins than is usual on the breast feathers. The feathers of the upper mantle also differ very considerably; the centres are white in an example from the Amoor, and black with a narrow white shaft-streak in examples from Northern and Central China; but other examples are intermediate in this respect.[1]

The handsomest specimen of the Siberian Pheasant that I have personally examined was sent to me from the neighbourhood of Neu-chwang. It has a very broad white collar of snowy purity, and the colours of

[1] *Ibis*, fifth series, vol. vi. p. 314

the flank and rump are singularly brilliant. It is now in the Carlisle Museum. The best known of the six remaining races of the Siberian Pheasant, as designated by Mr. Seebohm, is the Versicolor Pheasant, a native of all the Japanese islands except Yezo. It is easily distinguished from its congeners by its green flanks. Returning to the Common Pheasant, we find that Seebohm recognises six races of red-rumped pheasants; of these, the Persian Pheasant of the Attreck river seems to come nearest to the type. The Prince of Wales's Pheasant (*Phasianus principalis*) chances to have been discovered in Afghanistan by Russian and English naturalists almost simultaneously. This pheasant nearly coincides with Shaw's Pheasant, from which it is separated by the plateau of the Pamirs. The other two races recognised by Seebohm are *Phasianus chrysomelas* and the Mongolian Pheasant. The first-named is found in the lower valley of the Amu-Darya. It is remarkable for the rich metallic green margins of the feathers of the mantle. When thoroughbred it has no white ring, but the majority of examples show a more or less perfect approach to the interrupted ring of the Mongolian Pheasant. This latter has a great deal of green on its rump and upper tail coverts.[1] Some additional information upon this

[1] *Ibis*, fifth series, vol. v. p. 173.

topic will be found in the twenty-second volume of the 'Catalogue of Birds,' written by Mr. Ogilvie Grant, a leading authority upon game birds.

The Common Pheasant was a favourite in Italian poultry yards in the days of the Augustan Empire; but its treatment in confinement does not appear to have been described by any writer prior to Palladius, who is conjectured to have flourished about the time of Valentinian and Theodosius. Palladius followed Varro in many of his rules about agriculture; but his instructions for pheasant breeding appear to be original. He tells us that those who wish to rear pheasants should select birds of the previous year for that purpose, as old birds prove barren. Hen pheasants lay in March and April. A single cock will suffice to run with a couple of hens. The latter lay about twenty eggs apiece and only breed once in the season. It is best to place the eggs under domestic fowls, and a hen will cover fifteen pheasant eggs. Young pheasants should be fed for the first fortnight of their lives upon boiled barley meal which has been allowed to cool gradually. The meal requires to be sprinkled with wine for the first fortnight of their existence, after which we are advised to offer them pounded wheat, locusts and ants' eggs. The proper way of fattening a pheasant is to shut it up for

a month, and feed it upon a certain fixed quantity of flour or barley meal, the food being kneaded into small balls and moistened with olive oil, in order that it may be swallowed easily. Care must be taken to prevent a bird so treated from obtaining any unsuitable food.[1] The Italians appear to have continued pheasant rearing ever since those early days. That they adhered to the system in the sixteenth century is evidenced by an incidental comment of Aldrovandus, who takes exception to an erroneous remark of Palladius as to the period of time required for the incubation of pheasant eggs. Aldrovandus remarks that he cannot decide the point by his own experience, for he has never reared pheasants, but he knows a man at Florence who writes that the eggs of the pheasant require to be incubated for the same length of time as those of fowls, and that the chicks hatch out on the twenty-first day. Nowadays, pheasants are seldom reared in Italy, except by wealthy landowners. Two hundred and fifty pheasants were recently shot in the course of a day's sport near Genoa.[2]

I have not succeeded in ascertaining at what precise period the pheasant became naturalised in France, but it is probable that it was introduced into

[1] *De Re Rustica*, lib. i. cap. xxix.
[2] *Field*, January 19, 1895.

both that country and England through the agency of Roman officers employed upon foreign service. French ornithologists show much remissness in acquainting us with the distribution of their native birds; but M. Diguet states that the departments in which the pheasant is most numerous are those of the Seine-and-Marne, Seine-and-Oise, and of the Oise. He adds that the pheasant exists in a perfectly wild state in Touraine and Sologne.[1]

Such efforts as have been made to establish the pheasant in Spain have proved, I understand, entirely futile. The case is very different with regard to Great Britain. Even here the earliest documentary evidence of the naturalisation of this bird is late, dating only from the eleventh century. The information in question was brought to light by the Bishop of Oxford, who discovered that the regulations of King Harold in the year 1059 allowed the canons of Waltham Abbey a '*commons' pheasant* as the agreeable alternative to a brace of partridges. Dugdale's 'Monasticon' is often quoted in support of a statement that Henry I. granted the Abbot of Amesbury a licence to kill pheasants in the year 1100. The 'Saturday Review' states that Thomas Becket dined off a pheasant on the day he died, December 29,

[1] *Le Livre du Chasseur*, p. 64.

1179. In France, as in England, the pheasant was early protected by the Crown. Thus we find that Charles IV. of France allowed only his nobles to take pheasants in nets. In this connection may be noticed the curious fact brought to light by Professor Newton, that Henry VIII. seems from his privy purse expenses to have had in his household in 1532 a French priest as a regular 'fesaunt-breeder.' [1] Broderip supplies an interesting note: 'We are told that the price of a pheasant was 4*d.* in the time of our first Edward' (1299). In 'The Forme of Cury,' which is stated to have been compiled by the chief master-cook of King Richard II., there is a recipe 'for to boile Fesant, Ptruch, Capons and Curlew,' which carries us back to 1381. We read of the

Fawkon and the Fesaunt both

in the old ballad of the 'Battle of Otterbourne.' At the 'Intronazation of George Nevell,' Archbishop of York, in the reign of our fourth Edward, we find among the goodly provision, 'Fessauntes, 200.' In the 'Northumberland Household Book,' begun in 1512, 'Fesauntes' are valued at twelvepence each. In the charges of Sir John Neville, of Chete, at Lammas Assizes, in the twentieth year of King Henry VIII., twelve pheasants are charged at twenty shillings; and they seem

[1] *Dictionary of Birds*, p. 714.

to have maintained their value, as among the expenses of the same Sir John Nevile, for, as he writes it, 'the marriage of my son-in-law Roger Rockley and my daughter Elizabeth Nevile, the 14th of January, in the seventeenth year of the reigne of our soveraigne lord King Henry VIII.,' is the following: 'Item, in Pheasants 18, 24 shillings.' We trace the birds in 'A. C. Mery Talys,' printed by John Rastell, where we read of 'Mayster Skelton, a poyet lauryat, that broughte the bysshop of Norwiche ii fesauntys.'[1]

Pheasants seem to have been established in East Anglia at an early period. The 'Household Book' of the L'Estranges of Hunstanton for 1532 includes an entry: 'Itm, in reward the vij day of Jun to Fulm'ston servante for bryngynge iij fesands.' A similar note appears the year following: 'Itm, paid the xij day of June to Towars for money that he laid out at div's tymes when he went to take fesaunts.' Some of the entries cited by Stevenson recall the excellent sport which pheasants afforded those country gentlemen who kept hawks. These for example: 'Itm, a fesant kylled wt ye goshawke;' 'ij fesands and ij ptriches kylled wt the hawk.'[2]

In this connection it may be remembered that

[1] *English Cyclopædia*, 'Nat. Hist.,' vol. iv. p. 283.
[2] *Birds of Norfolk*, vol. i. p. 362.

one of the many delightful plates which illustrate Harting's 'Bibliotheca Accipitraria' is a reprint of a print by F. Barlow, engraved by Hollar in 1671, to represent a party of English falconers of the seventeenth century pheasant hawking with a goshawk. One would naturally suppose that the intimate relations which existed long ago between France and Scotland must have resulted in the early naturalisation of the pheasant in the latter country, but corroborative evidence is still wanting. The late Mr. Robert Gray ascertained that 'the first mention of the pheasant in old Scots Acts is in one dated June 8, 1594, in which year a keen sportsman occupied the Scottish throne. He might almost have been called 'James the Protector' of all kinds of game. In the aforesaid year he 'ordained that quhatsumever person or persones at ony time hereafter sall happen to slay deir, harts, phesants, foulls, partricks or uther wyld foule quhatsumever, ather with gun, croce bow, dogges, halkes, or girnes, or be uther ingine quhatsumever, or that beis found schutting with ony gun therein,' &c., shall pay the usual 'hundreth punds,' &c.[1] The date of this Act is, after all, only a vague guide as to the naturalisation of the pheasant in Scotland; but even so, it fixes it at a period long

[1] *Birds of the West of Scotland*, p. 226.

prior to the establishment of pheasants in some of the border counties of England. In the year 1622 we learn that a 'phesson' was sent to Lord William Howard, of Naworth, by a special messenger all the way from Yorkshire; while an attempt to introduce this game-bird into Westmoreland towards the end of that century proved abortive, not on account of the numerous hen harriers that then quartered the northern moorlands, but because every man's hand was against them; 'the countrey people distroy'd them before they increased to any considerable replennishing number.' As lately as 1784, Clarke, a local topographer, commented upon the absence of pheasants from Cumberland; but the fault was repaired a few years later by the exertions of Sir James Graham, Lord Muncaster, and other county magnates. And this recalls the fact that it was during the later years of the eighteenth century that the old race of pheasants, which had graced the banquets of the Tudor sovereigns, began to mingle with the ring-necked pheasant of Northern China, introduced about that time.

I have a fine print by C. Turner of a portrait of a celebrated pointer, Sancho, which is represented with a pheasant, and the bird is a ring-necked bird, showing the white collar to be well developed.

This engraving was published in 1808, by which time the Siberian, or ring-necked bird, was well known in England. Its introduction into Scotland was probably accomplished many years later. Macgillivray exhibited a curious incredulity as to the origin of the ring-necked bird, which he preferred to consider an accidental variety of the Common Pheasant. But we must not judge him too harshly, for it was only in the fifties at the earliest that ring-necked pheasants became common in Scotland. Zoology has few more curious surprises than the blending which Nature has effected between the Common and Siberian Pheasants. No one who compared the adult males of these two species would imagine that their characters could ever be absorbed into a fertile race of hybrids; for the colours of the pure-bred birds are extremely unlike. I refer to *typical* specimens, of which the majority of sportsmen can hardly, perhaps, judge; for, as Mr. Ogilvie-Grant remarks: 'It is very rarely now that anything approaching a pure-bred male of *P. colchicus* can be found in England; even in specimens which appear to be pure-bred at the first glance (that is, in those which have no trace of a white ring), the subterminal green bar of *P. torquatus* is usually more or less developed on the feathers of the lower back, and the basal part of the central tail

feathers is rather widely barred with black.'[1] As regards Ireland, Thompson has shown that the pheasant must have been introduced into that country prior to the year 1589, when Robert Payne stated in his tract, 'A Brife Description of Ireland,' that 'there be great store of wild swannes, cranes, *phesantes*, partriges, heathcocks, plouers greene and gray, curlewes, woodcockes, rayles, quailes, and all other fowles much more plentifull than in England.' Fynes Morison, who was in Ireland from 1599 till 1603, observes that there are 'such plenty of pheasants, as I have known sixty served up at one feast.' Smith seems to have imagined that pheasants were indigenous to the island, as in his 'History of Cork' it is remarked: 'They are now [1749] indeed very rare, most of our woods being cut down.' At the present time the pheasant is common in various wooded parts of the island, where it has been preserved and protected. The same may be said of its existence in Holland, Belgium, and Northern Germany.

Enormous numbers of pheasants are killed in Austria every year. Thus, no fewer than 142,912 birds of this species were shot by Austrian sportsmen in the year 1891. Northern Europe is obviously less suited to the peculiar requirements of the pheasant;

[1] *Catalogue of Birds*, vol. xxii. p. 321.

but its naturalisation in Sweden, first attempted on a large scale by the late King Oscar, was finally accomplished by Baron Dickson.

Pheasant shooting has now become possible in many countries. The island of St. Helena has long been the home of the Siberian Pheasant, which was introduced as long ago as 1775, and possibly much earlier. At the present time, according to Mr. Melliss, 'they exist abundantly, inhabiting the interior of the island. . . . They are protected by game laws, which permit them to be killed on payment of the licence for six weeks in the summer or autumn of each year; and hundreds of them are generally killed during one shooting season. They find plenty of covert, and generally make their nests in the long tufty fields of cow-grass.'[1] Notwithstanding the long isolation of their progenitors, these insulated birds only vary in the smallest degree from the typical Siberian Pheasant. The neighbouring island of Ascension can boast of a similar distinction. Nor are pheasants absent from the Antipodes. As long ago as 1876, pheasants were fairly established in Southern New Zealand. Indeed, 'along the Kuriwao Hills, and up the Waiwera Gorge, and all along that range by Kaihiku Bush, and Warepa, down to South Moly-

[1] *St. Helena*, p. 94.

neux, and for miles back, pheasants were to be found in great abundance.[1] Mr. W. B. Tegetmeier, the well-known authority on pheasants, furnishes an interesting note on the introduction of the Siberian Pheasant into Samoa : 'Owing to the kindness of Lieutenant de Crespigny, of H.M.S. "Curaçoa," we have received a specimen (male) of the pheasants which have been turned out and are now breeding in the Samoan Islands. This pheasant is undoubtedly of the Chinese ring-necked species, the neck being nearly surrounded by the distinguishing white collar ; but there is considerable difference in the colour of the neck at the base, and the scapulars, which are much lighter than in our ordinary race.'[2] The specimen in question was exhibited at a meeting of the British Ornithologists' Club. In America, much time and money has already been spent in the endeavour to naturalise ring-necked and common birds, especially in Ohio, Oregon, and British Columbia. Mr. Eugene Short, the Commissioner of Fish and Game for Ohio, states that 'in five years Ohio will have English pheasants in the greatest abundance. Writing from Macomb, in the State of Illinois, Mr. W. O. Blaisdell remarks that Judge Denney, while American Minister in China, during the Presidency of General Grant,

[1] *Zoologist*, 1877, p. 25. [2] *Field*, January 19, 1895.

shipped eleven Mongolian pheasants to the State of Oregon, where they were turned loose. The Secretary of State in Oregon writes me word that from these eleven Mongolian pheasants introduced by Judge Denney, of Portland, Oregon, only nine years since, there are now in existence at least a million descendants. They are spreading into the State of Washington to the north of Oregon, and to California on the south; whilst, simultaneously, some live specimens have been imported into New England, and others into the States on the Gulf of Mexico.' Mr. Blaisdell claims that four years ago he imported into the State of Illinois the first pair of Mongolian or Ring-necked Pheasants that ever crossed the Rocky Mountains. 'I turned them loose here,' he says, 'and they have been seen many times since. They are the most beautiful of game birds, and will live in any clime. In Vermont last winter they stood the very coldest weather ever experienced in that State, when it was 'way below zero.' [1]

[1] *Baily's Magazine*, 1895, p. 8.

CHAPTER II

THE PHEASANT OF THE WOODLANDS

The charm of the woods is strong upon us in the spring of the year, when we wander through the plantations of young firs, ready to note the cry of every bird that stirs overhead, anxiously straining our eyes in the endeavour to detect some dainty nest among the dead leaves which we ruthlessly crush under foot. The pheasant is an early breeding bird at home and abroad alike. The wild pheasants of the Caucasus begin to pair in March; at that period the cocks engage in combats which frequently end fatally for the weaker bird, and then the victor remains at the head of five or more hens, which after a time are found to avoid the cock in order to prepare their nests. I mention this for the express purpose of demonstrating that the polygamy of our English birds is not the result of artificial conditions. All the evidence which is supplied to me by Mr. Stuart points to the same conclusion. One Russian

gentleman writes that the pheasant 'is addicted to polygamy. This is proved by the fact that even in spring it happens that one may drive out one cock and several hens from the same spot. The natives also, who naturally have many opportunities of observing the life of the pheasant, maintain that this is the case. Persons wishing to preserve pheasants expressly shoot the cocks in the spring, saying that they destroy the nests and eat the eggs.' Another of my Russian correspondents writes that the male pheasant 'manages his family affairs in exactly the same manner as does the ordinary barndoor rooster. He has several wives or concubines, and is in constant hot water with other male birds that may be knocking about in search of a partner, as he regards with a very jealous eye any attempts at interference in his domestic arrangements. Upon the eggs being hatched the male bird attaches himself to the first hen with a family that he meets, and escorts her about. Sometimes several hens with their families put themselves under the protection of one cock, and sometimes several cocks act as cavaliers to one hen and family.' The hen pheasant generally begins to lay her eggs in the month of April. A wide latitude must be given to this event. In the North of England the keepers gather many pheasant eggs in the month

of May, just about the time that the first broods of woodcock are beginning to fly. In the Caucasus hen pheasants begin to lay from the middle to the end of April, according to the character of the spring, for warm genial weather hastens on nidification. March is the earliest month in which any of my correspondents have found the eggs of wild pheasants, and their experience would probably apply equally well to the British Islands. For example, the Rev. G. C. Green, of Modbury, Devon, authenticated the hatching of eleven pheasant chicks as early as April 18, in which case all the eggs must have been laid by the middle of March. Another early brood of pheasants was reported from Milford Haven in 1882. In this case the birds had all hatched out on April 27.[1] A year earlier eight young pheasants were hatched out upon a Norfolk farm on May 2.[2] When I was studying birds on the Rhine, the keepers showed me numbers of pheasants' nests full of eggs in July, and my personal experience of late nests in the North of Scotland is very similar. There are rare instances in which pheasants incubate their eggs during the autumn months. In 1893, Mr. W. W. Blest was out shooting partridges on September 3, near Staplehurst, when he disturbed a pheasant hen, which was sitting

[1] *Field*, May 6, 1882. [2] *Ibid.* May 14, 1881.

upon twelve eggs.[1] What is stranger still, eggs sometimes fully mature in the oviducts of hen pheasants during the winter months. A perfectly formed egg was taken from the body of a pheasant shot in Northumberland on December 13, and similar exceptions to rule might be cited.[2]

The choice of a nesting site varies with the individual bird. Mr. Djanaschvili writes that the hen pheasant of the Caucasus 'builds her nest and hatches her young generally in thick reeds or other dense undergrowth. The nest of this bird is invariably made on the ground; the hen chooses the driest place she can find. Having fixed on a suitable spot for the nest, and having lined it with soft straw or reeds, she lays in it from ten to fifteen whitish eggs, speckled with greenish yellow spots. The laying of the eggs begins at the end of April, and is continued until the middle of the latter month. After this, the brooding pheasant hardly leaves her eggs until they are hatched. It has been observed that not a single egg is spoilt unless some untoward event happens, such, for instance, as an excessive rain or the frequent frightening of the hen from the nest.'

The foregoing passage is suggestive of criticism.

[1] *Field*, Sept. 12, 1893. [2] *Ibid.* Dec. 25, 1880.

All the pheasants' nests that I have seen were placed upon the ground, but I never happened to discover a pheasant's nest in a reed bed, though both in Norfolk and in Germany pheasants often nest like ducks in the centre of tussocks of sedge; that, at least, has been my own experience. On some few occasions I have waded out to pheasants' nests which were completely surrounded by water, so that one felt puzzled to know how the poor chicks were ever to scramble on to dry land. But most of the nests that have so far occurred to me were slight scratchings in the ground, lined with a few stems of grass, and screened from observation by long sprays of brambles or tall wavy grass. The curious thing is that some eccentric hen pheasants prefer to secure their personal safety by nesting in trees, as well as on stacks and walls overgrown with ivy. My impression is that the pheasant resorts to such an unusual nesting place only for safety. Probably she has been scared at some time or another by a fox or a half-wild cat, and has developed a nervous distrust of a less exalted situation for sitting in. Nesting pheasants are exposed to many dangers; nor would they be likely to remain unscathed, were it not for the twofold protection which Nature has provided for them. I may be tedious in alluding to such a commonplace, but to me the sight

of a brooding bird is sure to awaken some pleasant train of thought. I like to catch the precise attitude of a sitting pheasant without attracting her notice, and by a mental effort to photograph her easy repose upon the mind's vision, so that every delicate blade of grass, all the exquisite tracery of the dead and crumbling leaves, may be remembered as a sight of beauty; and especially the shapely form of the russet-plumed bird, with her finely turned bill and bright, distrustful irides, her whole being absorbed in the supreme effort to fulfil the duties of maternal love. To me there seems to be a world of natural poetry latent in the possibilities that a pheasant's nest suggests; indeed, it sets one's mind working for the rest of the day.

But mention must be made of the precise circumstances under which pheasants have nested aloft. And first, it must not be supposed that the phrase just employed implies that pheasants *build* aërial nests of their own; for nothing could be more absurd. When a pheasant decides to nest in a tree, she takes possession of an old nest of the wood-pigeon, sparrow-hawk, or some other bird. One of the most recent instances of a pheasant choosing an arboreal site for her eggs occurred in 1892, and was reported by Thomas Scott in the following words: 'On May 20

a pheasant's nest with eleven eggs was found here fully twenty feet from the ground in a spruce fir. Thinking there would be a poor chance for the young when hatched, I went for the purpose of bringing away the eggs to put under a hen. The old bird was sitting on and was determined to protect her eggs, pecking at my hand and flapping her wings at me. I thought it seemed a pity to rob such a good mother, so I left her with five eggs to try her luck; the other eggs I put under a hen, and they hatched out eleven days after. Knowing that the others up the tree would be hatched also, I went to relieve the captives, and on nearing the spot there was a young bird calling at the bottom of the tree, and the old one calling in reply from above. I brought them to the ground, the old bird keeping quite near all the time, pecking and darting at me now and then. The young I put together, and on leaving the mother chased me out of the wood, and then flew back to her young. How the young bird was saved from being killed by the fall was, no doubt, owing to the thick branches.'[1]

In the summer of 1894 Lord Lilford authenticated a similar instance of a pheasant appropriating a wood-pigeon's nest, in which she laid nine eggs.

[1] *Field*, June 6, 1892.

Three young birds were subsequently found dead at the foot of the tree which contained the nest, but it was believed that the remainder of the brood had reached the ground in safety.[1]

Mr. Djanaschvili has incidentally raised the question of the colour of the eggs. He describes them as *whitish speckled with greenish-yellow spots.* Now, all the pheasant eggs which I have seen were either of a pale uniform blue—a scarce variety—or they were uniformly olive-brown. I should have thought that Mr. Djanaschvili had made a *lapsus calami*, were it not that his experience receives independent confirmation from another Russian gentleman, who states that the eggs of the pheasant of the Caucasus 'are olive-coloured, with grey spots.' There is nothing new in this, for Aristotle mentions it: 'The colours of eggs vary in different kinds of birds. Some have white eggs, as pigeons, partridges; some yellow, as those inhabiting streams; others are spotted, as those of the meleagris and pheasant.'[2]

There is evidently room for further inquiry about the eggs of the Caucasian pheasants.

Another point of interest is the number of eggs

[1] *Zoologist*, 1894, p. 266.

[2] *History of Animals*, book vi. chap. ii.

laid by a single hen pheasant. One Russian sportsman says that the bird lays from twelve to twenty-four eggs. A second considers that a clutch of pheasant eggs varies from twelve to twenty. The third remarks that he can personally vouch for a hen laying fifteen eggs. Mr. Djanaschvili says that the number of eggs varies from ten to fifteen. This latter is in harmony with my experience, and we may safely infer that, when more than fifteen eggs are found in one nest, two hen pheasants have probably laid together. There is nothing surprising in their doing so. Any Highland keeper would tell you that the pheasant often lays along with other birds, such as the partridge, grouse, grey hen, capercailzie, and landrail; sometimes her eggs are found with those of the wild duck and woodcock. This phenomenon occurs pretty frequently; Mr. Yuille states that he has 'seen young pheasants hatched and reared by grouse, in company with their own young, and they grew up to maturity.' Mr. Djanaschvili thinks that eggs are rarely addled, but in my experience they are often unfertile. And this reminds me of an amusing incident that happened a few years ago. I was staying at a village inn in the Rhine country, when a Frenchman who leased the shootings in the neighbourhood unexpectedly arrived to see how his keepers were succeed-

ing in rearing game. We spent a pleasant evening together, in the course of which I happened to express an interest in the eggs of birds. When we met at breakfast next morning, my new acquaintance produced an *addled* pheasant's egg, which he then and there presented to me as a valuable addition to my collection of egg shells!

A more droll incident befell a friend of mine in Derbyshire, but it shall be narrated in his own words: 'The rape of the pheasant's eggs was on this wise. A housemaid of ours had friends over here from Sheffield. The day being fine, they decided to walk over to Haddon Hall. As they were returning back by the footpath through the fields, her surprise was great when she beheld quite near the path a nest full of shiny brown eggs. In her hand was one of those little leather bags in which the fair sex sometimes stow away a handkerchief. She knew that I collected eggs, and what better receptacle could there be than the little bag? They were quickly deposited therein and carefully carried home. When she arrived here, she informed me that she had found something for me. I looked into her wretched bag and there saw the beautiful brown pheasant's eggs. I exclaimed, "Do you know what they are?" She replied in the negative, so I informed her. But she

seemed not the least perturbed and said, "*I thought that they were probably blackbird's eggs!*"'

The period required for the incubation of the eggs of the pheasant has been variously estimated. Mr. William Evans, who has made the incubation of birds' eggs a subject of special research, states that the eggs of the pheasant usually hatch out at the very end of the twenty-third day. Of the eggs which this writer placed under hens, two chicks hatched out on the twenty-second day, thirty hatched on the twenty-third, one hundred and three hatched on the twenty-fourth, and five on the twenty-fifth.[1]

The Rev. G. C. Green has recorded a curious instance of a cock pheasant voluntarily sitting on nine eggs and hatching out the young (*Field*, June 27, 1891). I have seen great numbers of poults trampled upon by brooding fowls, a catastrophe which the chicks escape in a state of nature. 'On the chicks being hatched,' writes Mr. Djanaschvili, 'the mother first dries and warms them under her wings, and then feeds them with small grains. During the first few days the chicks are almost entirely covered with a delicate yellowish down, which in time turns greyish-brown. As soon as the chicks get a little stronger, the mother takes them to run about and search for food.

[1] *Ibis*, sixth series, vol. iii. p. 76.

On these occasions they preserve the most absolute silence, and from excessive caution scarcely seem to walk, but, as it were, glide along the ground between the stalks of wheat or reeds. In case of any danger threatening, the mother utters a shrill warning cry and rushes into the thick undergrowth, swiftly followed by her brood. The unfledged chicks of the pheasant are so speedy and nimble that it is almost impossible to catch them. And further, the yellowish colour of their down, which is almost the same shade as that of the golden corn fields, is of considerable assistance to them. The mother does not entirely desert the nest till her brood is fledged, unless it is discovered by the reapers or some other enemy. When the young are fledged, the mother with the whole brood makes excursions from place to place, with a view to finding a quiet, comfortable spot where food is abundant.' Another correspondent writes also from the Caucasus, that the pheasant is less attentive to her young than the ordinary fowl; 'this is proved by the fact that one may often come across young ones of different ages following the same pheasant hen.'

Every intelligent keeper will admit that the hen pheasant is far inferior to the partridge as a nurse. The former is most jealous of being disturbed while she is sitting, and desertion frequently follows an un-

warranted intrusion ; but even when the chicks have hatched, the pheasant is a careless, clumsy mother, content to abandon the majority of her family in any emergency. The young poults feed on the wood-ant and its cocoons, as well as a variety of insects ; a light warm shower brings the worms to the surface of the ground, where they are seized and eagerly devoured. Keepers commonly suspend pieces of carrion in such a way that the maggots or larvæ of the blow-fly may serve to regale their pheasant chicks, which soon learn where to search for those that drop to the ground.

The chief enemies which the pheasants of the Caucasus have to elude are the jackals, foxes, and large birds of prey. Many eggs are destroyed also by the inundation of flooded rivers. In Great Britain, the fox and the house-cat are the worst vermin that the pheasant dreads. The protective colour of the plumage of the hen pheasant, coupled with the fact of its scent being absorbed into the system during the labours of incubation, play an important part in its survival. The eggs and young are sought after by such small quadrupeds as the squirrel, the hedgehog, the stoat, and that bane of modern civilisation, the hateful brown rat. It occasionally happens that a long-eared owl or a kestrel takes a fancy

for levying blackmail upon the coops; but the exception proves the rule, and the damage inflicted by owls or kestrels is quite insignificant. I have known a hen sparrow-hawk pull down a hen pheasant, but such an event is rare, I believe.

The carrion crow, jay, and magpie have a special *penchant* for game eggs; the first especially has a bad record. I am not so sure about jays. I have seen lots of jays in coverts on the Continent which were full of game, and I asked the keepers their reason for sparing these robbers. Their answer was that jays feed on insects, and do no harm to the game preserves. To test their theory I killed a jay, and, sure enough, its interior was crammed with large cockchafers. The moral of this appears to be, that jays will not hunt for eggs if they can get plenty of insect food, but that when pushed for hunger they become pillagers of eggs and young. It has been alleged that the Greater Spotted Woodpecker has been known to kill a young pheasant, and I confess I partly believe it, but only as a most abnormal and curious eccentricity on the part of that bird. When I introduced two young Greater Spotted Woodpeckers into a cage which contained two of the lesser species, the female of the latter attacked one of the former most savagely, beating it about the head with

such violence as to produce speedy death. But such an incident is quite unlikely to recur, and no pains should be spared to protect and encourage our woodpeckers in every possible way.

The idea of the comparative tameness of home-bred pheasants is so familiar to the majority of people, that it is startling to find how shy are their kindred in the valleys of the Caucasus. 'The shyness and unsociability of the pheasant,' writes Mr. Djanaschvili, 'has become so well known that amongst the Georgians of the Zakatal district it has passed into the proverb, "Unsociable as a pheasant;" also the saying, "Feed them as much as you will, they will still always keep their eyes turned towards the woods," is equally applied to the wolf and the pheasant. Attempts to domesticate the pheasant have always failed. The trial has often been made of placing a pheasant's egg under an ordinary fowl, but as soon as the chick was hatched it has always succeeded in making off within two or three days.'[1] Another correspondent writes that pheasants 'love solitude and promptly fly off on hearing the slightest noise, fearing themselves to be in danger.' He adds that the wild nature of the pheasant induces it to shun even its own species.

One of the traits of wild life which still survive

[1] *Caucasian Agriculture*, October 27, 1894.

in our semi-domesticated pheasants is the desire which they show (especially the males) of escaping from danger through their fleetness of foot rather than by their speed of wing. A story is current in Perthshire of a short-sighted sportsman who used to shoot regularly over a tit-bit of cover. Tradition says that, finding that he could not always see his dog in cover, owing to his own visual deficiency, he sought to remedy the misfortune by attaching a bell to the neck of his spaniel. The result was that the sound of the bell became a signal for all the pheasants that happened to be in the wood to make themselves scarce. Old cock pheasants sometimes run a mile before beaters rather than take wing, and in the case of an emergency will even bolt into a rabbit hole. This is exactly what a knowledge of the habits of the wild bird prepares us to expect; for the latter prefers the thickest covert that can be found, and usually skulks in reed beds, brushwood, and other undergrowth, especially in the neighbourhood of running water, for the pheasant can both swim and dive if necessity requires.

The wild pheasants are sometimes disturbed by grazing cattle, on which occasions they undoubtedly fly a distance of from one to two miles. 'The pheasant does not rise high in its flight. It always tries to

keep near the ground, so that, in case of danger, it may instantly dash into the nearest bushes or thicket. The frightened pheasant, uttering a shrill and discordant cry of alarm, suddenly flies up almost perpendicularly into the air, and, having risen from forty to sixty yards high, immediately shoots off at a tangent, and then flies off, at a right angle, to the wood or thicket, where it hides itself in a trice.'

As regards the distribution of the wild pheasant, we learn from Djanaschvili that this bird is still to be found in Mingrelia and Samouzakani. In other parts, as, for instance, the districts of Sharopan, Ratchinsk, and Letchgoum, pheasants have unfortunately been altogether exterminated. In Lower Imeretia, and in Gouria, very few remain; one sportsman with a dog can with difficulty bag five head in a day. The local inhabitants of Gouria affirm that formerly pheasants abounded in their region. This also is testified to by the geographer, Vakhousti Bagration, in his 'Geography of Georgia,' completed by him on October 20, 1745. He asserts that the pheasant (khokobi) abounds everywhere in Georgia, but especially in Kakhetia and the Zakatal district. The pheasant is still common in those districts; but, above all, in the Zakatal Circuit, whence every autumn large quantities of dead pheasants are sent to Tiflis. Mr.

Djanaschvili believes that the pheasant 'delights to live in warm, low-lying, and somewhat damp localities. In summer and early autumn they keep in flocks of from ten to twenty head, and sometimes more. In winter the coveys or family parties break up, and, as a rule, the birds are to be found singly in spring, or else in pairs; sometimes several cocks are found together.'

An interesting fact to game preservers is that the wild pheasants perform migratory movements. 'With us in the Zakatal Circuit,' says Djanaschvili, 'the pheasant in the summer often migrates to the higher localities at the foot of the mountains; but, after the crops are gathered in, and on the approach of the first cold weather of the autumn, it again returns to the low-lying valleys of the river Alazani, where it passes the winter in the reeds, long weeds, and bushes.'

A question of interest to sportsmen is the food of the pheasant, which in this country consists of the tender shoots of plants, grass, bulbous roots, worms, and insects. A cock pheasant which I dissected in the month of June was full of the roots of the common buttercup. Even the oak spangles attract the attention of pheasants. Sometimes they eat such hard food as hazel nuts; as many as twenty-eight nuts have been taken out of the crop of a pheasant. Mr. J. Theobald extracted ninety-three

acorns from the crop of a pheasant cock. Pheasants like to feed upon potatoes a short time before they are lifted. In the spring of the year they do a good deal of injury to newly sown barley. When hard pinched they feed on the polypody fern and many other vegetable substances. They have, in fact, become practically omnivorous in this country. The wild pheasants feed on all kinds of grain, especially wheat and barley, grass seeds and berries, grapes, hips, &c. If the wild fruits of the forest become scarce in winter, they feed in the nearest fields on grass seeds.

In winter cattle are turned out to feed in the dry reeds, which they trample down, and the pheasants are then generally to be found in the damp spots which have escaped their attention. They are shot over dogs, and the bag varies with the locality. In some districts as many as thirty and forty birds can be shot in a day ; but such numbers are due to some protection afforded to the birds. Nor is this surprising if we take into account the persecution to which the birds are exposed at the hands of the peasantry.

The following method is adopted by peasants who have meadows overgrown with coarse weeds or reeds or corn fields on their lands : 'In these meadows or corn fields they clear away a space about the size of a threshing floor, and then close to this clearing they

construct a hiding place in which they can lie in wait; on the cleared space they place sheaves of wheat or barley. The pheasants discover this food and flock to pick it up. Then a flock from the ambuscade follows, and often several birds are killed at one shot.'

In some districts the peasants resort to a third method of killing pheasants, which was formerly practised in Europe—viz. they hunt with dogs which do not point the birds, but put them up, and bark until they have forced them to seek refuge in the trees. When the birds perch aloft, the dogs stand under the trees, and continue to bark. The shooter soon arrives, and as the attention of the pheasant is being concentrated on the dogs, the peasant is pretty sure to get a 'pot-shot' at the bird.

The flesh of a fat pheasant is considered most delicate eating; the Russians generally eat their pheasants roasted with butter. As the pheasants are generally fattest after harvest, they are much sought after at the end of summer and in early autumn, at which time whole flocks of pheasants roam about in the stubble fields with the cocks at their head.

The weight of game birds is always a welcome topic at the end of a day's sport. The English-bred pheasant is generally found to scale between three and four pounds. The maximum weight yet attained appears

to be five pounds fifteen ounces, as weighed by Admiral Sir Houston Stewart. Others have scaled from four pounds twelve ounces to five pounds twelve ounces.

Mr. Stuart informs me that the weight of a fat full-grown cock pheasant shot in the Caucasus approximates to about five pounds, *Russian* weight, while a similar hen bird would scale about four pounds and a half. But the usual weight of an ordinary wild pheasant cock is about four pounds, Russian weight, and that of the hen nearly a pound less. Mr. Djanaschvili considers that a full-grown cock pheasant should scale about four Russian pounds. The hen is about one pound lighter.

Mr. W. B. Tegetmeier, whose lifelong experience of the pheasant is probably unique, figured the heads of two remarkable pheasants in the *Field* of January 12, 1895, with a view of exemplifying the wonderful way in which these birds contrive to survive the most terrible injuries. One of the birds to which Mr. Tegetmeier drew attention had been deprived of both mandibles, probably by a steel trap. Notwithstanding the serious character of the injury, the wounds had healed, and the bird was in fair condition when shot. It weighed two pounds five ounces, and its crop contained thirty-three beech nuts.

CHAPTER III

FREAKS AND ODDITIES

Every man who shoots is certain sooner or later to come across some pied varieties of birds. Partridges, grouse, woodcock, snipe, and a host of common field-row birds, vary in plumage among their fellows. The birds which show the first departure from the traditional colour of their species are often marked with the same patterns of colours as their mates; the difference is that these unusual birds reproduce the customary markings upon a paler or darker ground than we are accustomed to see. This deficiency of colour is generally caused by some physiological suppression of the pigments which naturally go to tint the feathers. When this irregularity has become marked, birds become white or heavily marked with white, or perhaps throw off a sport in a new direction. White birds are generally called albinos; but the term is inadmissible, unless they combine the double irregularity of correlating pink irides with blanched white plumage.

Birds that are white but have irides of the usual

colour cannot properly be described by the term albino. They are examples of leucotism, but not of albinism. For example, I had a beautiful white wood-pigeon brought to me recently; it was a lovely bird, but not an albino in spite of its showy garb, because its eyes were of the usual colour. We have, most of us, admired white pheasants both old and young. On the whole, I think the prettiest are the tiny chicks covered with snow-white down, which forms a pretty contrast to the mottled appearance of their fellows. White and pied birds tend likewise to transmit their deficiency of pigment to their offspring, for leucotism is to a large extent hereditary in pheasants. Female birds do not seem to vary in colour as much as cock pheasants; but this impression is perhaps partly accounted for by the fact that we shoot and handle a majority of male birds. The brown plumage of a hen pheasant appears to be set off to great advantage by a copious admixture of white body feathers; but this feature is, in reality, a grave disadvantage, as it tends to destroy the protective coloration of the brooding bird. As a natural consequence, it renders it more liable to be discovered and destroyed by foxes and other predaceous animals. A few pied birds in the coverts, however, add to the picturesqueness of the scene.

A more interesting and less usual variety of the

pheasant is the pale, buff-coloured form, which is popularly known as the Bohemian Pheasant. The title is a misnomer; how it was invented I do not know. It was probably a freak of fancy, for the Bohemian Pheasant occurs more frequently in England than anywhere else. The variety appears to have originated with the Common Pheasant, at a time when the Ring-necked Pheasant was a stranger to Europe. A good portrait of a so-called Bohemian Pheasant is to be seen in the Louvre, among the *chefs-d'œuvre* of a painter named Desportes, who flourished between 1661 and 1743. Two magnificent pheasant cocks of the old-fashioned type appear running before dogs in the foreground, while a pale bird of the so-called Bohemian variety is painted in the act of rising, and forms the most conspicuous feature in the upper part of the canvas. Oddly enough, I found a very similar bird to this Bohemian exposed for sale in the Paris market in October 1894; it was, unfortunately, too much damaged to be worth preserving. But 'Bohemians' crop up among the Ring-necked Pheasants as well as among plain-necked birds. Mr. C. F. Archibald, for instance, lately sent me a photo of a fine male 'Bohemian,' obtained upon his own property at Rusland, in which the white collar of the Chinese bird forms a prominent feature. Whether Isabelline or Bohemian specimens of the

Ring-necked Pheasant are ever shot or snared in the proper home of this Eastern bird, I am at present unable to say. Most of the European game birds are liable to exhibit melanistic variations of colouring; but I have not come across a black pheasant of either sex so far.

A curious fact in the zoology of the pheasant is the comparative frequency with which the livery of the cock pheasant is assumed by birds of the opposite sex. This peculiarity is not by any means confined to the pheasant. I have myself dissected examples of one or two species of wild ducks which exemplified such a departure from rules; and my friend Mr. J. H. Gurney has drawn up quite a long list of birds, the females of which have been known to assume the dress of the male in a perfect or partial degree. It may safely be assumed, however, that this curious biological phenomenon has occurred far more persistently in the case of the Common Pheasant than of any other bird. As long ago as the year 1812, Blumenbach read a paper on this theme before the Göttingen Royal Society, enumerating ten species in which he had ascertained such an aberration of conduct to occur.

In France, Geoffroy St.-Hilaire published a paper entitled 'Femelles de Faisan a Plumage de Males,' in

1825, and this was followed two years later by Yarrell's essay, 'On the Change in the Plumage of some Hen Pheasants.' Yarrell also figured the ovary of a female pheasant in male plumage, to illustrate the presence of internal disease. I have only dissected one such bird myself, and in that particular case the ovary was certainly disorganised; but it must not be supposed that all the female pheasants which assume male dress are diseased or even barren birds. Broderip warns us against rashly accepting such a generalisation in the following words: 'Hen pheasants which have begun to put on the livery of the male are not always incapable of producing eggs.'

Thus Broderip says: 'Sir Philip Egerton has informed us that a hen pheasant at Oulton Park, Cheshire, which had nearly assumed the plumage of a cock, laid a nest full of eggs, from which she was driven by the curiosity of persons who came to gaze at so strange a sight. She then laid another nest full of eggs, sat upon them and hatched them; but the young all died soon after they were excluded.'[1]

I have never had an opportunity of comparing any large series of these abnormal hen pheasants together, but examples can be seen in many country houses. The late Sir W. Jardine, Bart., possessed

[1] *English Cyclopædia*, vol. iv. p. 284.

such specimens, and very fine they were. The best that I have seen of late years belongs to Mr. F. P. Johnson, of Castlesteads, Cumberland. The central tail feathers of this pheasant appear to measure about eighteen inches and a half, or about three inches less than those of a good cock pheasant; but I did not see this bird in the flesh. The late Mr. Stevenson met with an interesting pheasant hen in November 1877. 'The head and throat were far more glossy than is usual in such birds, and the feathers of the back and under parts were of a peculiarly rich coppery tint. The Chinese strain was forcibly shown on each side of the neck by a marked patch of white, as in old cock birds.' [1]

Not a few of the pheasants killed in large shoots will be found to show signs of a mixed origin. Indeed, if the truth be told, the majority of our pheasants are cross-bred. They are generally the fertile representatives of the blending of Common and Ring-necked Pheasants, and, as already remarked, show plenty of evidence of their mixed origin. Mr. W. B. Tegetmeier is the highest authority upon English pheasants, and has contributed many important articles upon their history to the *Field* newspaper. This gentleman considers that the use of the term hybrid as applied

[1] *Zoologist*, 1878, p. 41.

to the cross-birds between any of the varieties of the restricted genus *Phasianus* is incorrect. He prefers to style them 'mongrels between local varieties of the same species.' But whether we call them hybrids or mongrels does not matter much. The fact that they exist is what interests us. To tell the truth, birds of the pheasant family form the most curious nuptial ties. These are generally due to the accidental or designed meeting of birds of opposite sexes in pens or aviaries, and are therefore due to artificial conditions; but they are very surprising for all that.

Something like a score of different hybrid pheasants have already been procured in this country. For example, the Cheer Pheasant of the Himalayas has hybridised with Temminck's Tragopan; the Common Pheasant has produced hybrid young by pairing with the Cheer Pheasant, with the Black-backed Kaleege, the Silver Pheasant, the Gold Pheasant, and Reeves's Pheasant, as well as with its near allies, the Versicolor and Ring-necked Pheasants. The Ring-necked Pheasant, in like fashion, has been found to produce hybrids with the Versicolor, while the Versicolor Pheasant has crossed with the Purple Kaleege; the Lineated Kaleege crosses with the Siamese Pheasant, as the Black-backed Kaleege hybridises with the Rufous-tailed Pheasant, just as the

Gold Pheasant interbreeds with Amherst's Pheasant, and the latter with Swinhoe's Pheasant. Indeed, the crosses which have taken place are rather bewildering to a student, many of them being such as one would have thought extremely improbable.

Now, hybrids such as those just named do occur from time to time in our coverts, and, when they are shot, local sportsmen are sorely puzzled to know what they should be called, and how they came to find them. Mr. Tegetmeier exhibited two such hybrid birds before the Zoological Society, representing crosses between the Common Pheasant and the Gold Pheasant, as also between the Silver and Common Pheasants. 'It is needless,' he writes, 'to say that these specimens were not designedly reproduced. How, then, it may be asked, do they come in the coverts? The explanation appears to me very easy. Many persons keep Gold or Silver Pheasants. A hen escapes from the aviary, gains access into the coverts, wanders perhaps many miles, presently locates herself, in default of a proper mate she associates with the ordinary pheasant, and in this manner the hybrids are produced. This is equally true of the Silver Pheasant. Of course, where these birds associate with their own species hybrids would not be produced; but when a single bird is at liberty and has only another

species to associate with, it usually pairs, and hybrids are the result.'[1] Mr. Tegetmeier is, no doubt, perfectly correct in his explanation; but there is reason to think that the majority of curious hybrid pheasants killed are birds which were hand-reared.

Dealers cross their penned pheasants both intentionally and accidentally—just as it suits their own convenience, in fact. Sometimes different species may pair in their pens without the knowledge of the pheasant farmers. The eggs of the penned pheasants are sent out in hundreds and thousands to keepers all over England, and, naturally enough, a small percentage of eggs produce hybrid young, which are reared along with the usual mongrel pheasants, and take to ranging the woods like the rest of the young birds as they become strong and independent. The fact remains, however, that the foreign pheasants which have been turned down in England do voluntarily interbreed with the Common Pheasant in a state of liberty. M. Suchetet, who has paid much attention to hybrids, states that he cannot find any evidence that Reeves's Pheasant crosses with the Common Pheasant in any of the great preserves which are inhabited by both species on the Continent. The Prince of Wagram, for instance, has possessed a strain

[1] *Field*, December 16, 1893.

of wild Reeves's Pheasants for the last twenty years. They have bred freely in his preserves, and he has shot no fewer than ninety cock birds, besides disposing of fifty-five pairs of live birds, and others have been shot after they had strayed out of his woods. But these birds have not crossed with the Common Pheasants which share their haunts. On the contrary, the larger birds chase the others off the ground. They often indulge in furious fights, the result sometimes being that they kill one another. M. Dabry has kept both these species in his park at Saint-Germain-les-Corbeil for six years, and they get on well together. The hens of these two species sometimes lay in one nest, but they do not interbreed. A hybrid between Reeves's Pheasant and the common bird has indeed been obtained in France, but M. Van Kempen, who bought it at Lille in December 1879, ascertained that it had been sent thither in a consignment of English pheasants. But wild pheasants are well known to interbreed in cases where their territory happens to overlap, as is the case with the Black-backed and White-crested Kaleege. Moreover, M. Maingounat, a Paris naturalist, informed M. Suchetet that he found among a consignment of Versicolor and Sœmmerring's Pheasants a single individual which presented well-defined characteristics of both these

species, and was therefore an undoubted hybrid. This bird had been killed in the wild state.[1]

Longolius, the author of a curious little book which I have only seen in the Bodleian Library, entitled 'Dialogus de Avibus,' published at Cologne in 1544, gives us curious and highly circumstantial directions as to breeding cross-bred pheasants, an enterprise which he describes as being very speculative but often profitable. The plan adopted by the pheasant breeder of those days was to confine a single cock pheasant in a room or pen ten feet long and the same in breadth. The floor was covered with brushwood and dry earth. All the small windows faced south, the light entering chiefly from above. The pen was divided by a hurdle of wicker-work, in which a space large enough to admit the head and neck of a bird was left open. The pheasant reigned supreme in one half of the aviary. At the beginning of spring, the breeder selected some common hens, known to be good layers, and of similar colour to a hen pheasant. These birds were then fed together for some days, but their food was strewn in such a way that the cock pheasant could devour his share of the food by craning his neck through the orifice left for that purpose in the hurdle. The birds were kept apart thus at

[1] Suchetet, *Les Oiseaux Hybrides*, p. 84.

first, because it was feared that otherwise the pheasant might attack the hens and do them an injury. But after he had become accustomed to them, the hen upon which he seemed to have bestowed most favour was admitted to his presence, and the food increased. It was found that the pheasant often tried to kill the first hen introduced to him, in which case the poultryman would wring the neck of the rejected partner, but continued to introduce other hens, until the pheasant eventually paired with them. The young hybrids resulting from this cross were reared on meal and wild berries, and eventually sold as pheasants for the market.

The pheasant is apt to stray away from its usual haunts in the spring of the year, when single males often take up their abode in some small cover in the vicinity of a keeper's house. Under such circumstances a cock pheasant often exhibits his pugnacity in attempting to drive away the domestic cocks; should the former bird succeed in this enterprise, he proceeds to pair with the hens, which are not disinclined to receive the overtures of the stranger. Such an alliance results in the production of hybrid young, which generally resemble their female parent in most particulars. These cross-bred birds, therefore, differ much *inter se*, according to their origin.

The late Mr. Stevenson met with three such hybrids in Norfolk, produced from the union of a cock pheasant with a Cochin China fowl, a cross-bred game Dorking, and a black bantam respectively. These three birds were all procured in a wild state. The second of the three, which proved to be a male, 'had been repeatedly seen amongst the pheasants in the wood when the beaters were driving the game towards the guns; but as it ran with great swiftness, and never attempted to rise on the wing, it always managed to escape, and was at last netted to ascertain what it was. It measured thirty-two inches from the tip of its beak to the extremity of the tail, stood nineteen inches from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, and weighed seven and three-quarter pounds. In its general appearance it had a strange admixture of both pheasant and fowl, and was not unlike a capercailzie cock about the head and neck. The legs were clean and strong without spurs, and decidedly gallinaceous in character; the beak large and powerful, and the tail long and rounded, with the middle feathers somewhat the longest. The plumage may be described as of a rich glossy green about the head, neck all round, and the upper part of the breast; back and wings mottled with rich dark chestnut glossed here and there with green, and each feather tipped with a metallic shade of green; the

lower parts of the back and upper tail coverts more green than black; under parts brown, dashed with buffy-white in places; tail feathers black, slightly marked on some of the webs longitudinally with dull white, or slightly freckled.'[1] The hybrid which Mr. Stevenson examined, between a pheasant and bantam, was entirely black, with dark green reflections; the tail was shaped like that of a pheasant, but the legs and feet resembled those of a common fowl.

Three very different birds, a cock and two hens, were shown at the last ornithological exhibition at Stargard, in Pomerania. The hen which had produced them had been kept in the neighbourhood of the forest, and had mated with a wild pheasant. The mules resulting from this cross were white, with yellow reflections upon their feathers.

At a sale of duplicate specimens from the collection of Mr. J. Whitaker, a number of interesting hybrids were exhibited, and among others several hybrids between the blackcock and pheasant. Mules of this kind have been known in England ever since Gilbert White wrote his 'History of Selborne.' The first mentioned was shot at Holt, in Sussex, but others have been obtained in various parts of England, as well as in Scotland and Ireland.

[1] *Birds of Norfolk*, vol. i. p. 308.

A beautiful plate of a blackcock-pheasant hybrid is to be found in Mr. J. G. Millais's 'Game Birds and Sporting Sketches.' The bird is represented as standing in an upright position, full of self-consciousness, and is apparently ready to challenge a rival to the fray. Mr. Millais remarks that this specimen, which belongs to Mrs. Hunter, of Glen App, Ayrshire, is the handsomest hybrid of any game species that he has ever seen. 'It is usually the case that in most of the crosses with which the blackcock has anything to do the young take very strongly after him, and are generally of a very plain and black appearance, without possessing that noble bird's individual beauties, but in this specimen the characteristics of both the parents are perfectly distinct.'

Mr. Montagu Brown supplies an interesting note upon a male hybrid of this kind, which he received from Major Knight, who had shot it in Shropshire. On dissection it proved to be a male, and measured twenty-five inches in total length. The plumage of this hybrid resembled the pheasant as regards the tail and wings, but the head, neck, and breast showed the characters of the blackgame. The legs and toes agreed with those of a pheasant in colour, shape, size, and feathering.

Thompson furnishes the following description of a

male hybrid, which was shot in Wigtonshire in 1835 : 'In colour the hybrid has head, neck, breast, and belly black ; each feather, when viewed in the light, terminating in a band of rich claret colour tinged with gold, which decreases in breadth downwards, until at the lower part of the belly it disappears. On laying back the breast feathers, the inner ones exhibit, about an inch or less from the tip, a somewhat semicircular band of a cream colour ; the inner feathers at [the] upper part of the back, similarly examined, show the cream-coloured marking of the pheasant, the remainder of the feather being black, except the termination, which is of a claret colour. Upper part of back, wings, and tail, not resembling either sex of black-grouse or pheasant, but having a soft blending of grey, brownish-yellow, and black, beautifully undulated : quills differing only from the black-cock's in the shafts being blackish-brown. Tail feathers obscurely undulated with black and brownish-yellow, and transversely barred with black, the bars on the outer feathers occupying as much space as the mottled plumage, their tips black for an inch and a half ; this colour gradually lessens towards the central feathers, the five longest being mottled at their extremities. These present a singular reverse to the longest tail feathers of the pheasant, in which the bars become broader as

they approach the end; in this bird they altogether disappear there. Some of the feathers on the wing-coverts have the shaft cream-coloured, with the centre black, ending in a point towards the tip as in the pheasant; but the cream-coloured band surrounding it in that bird is wanting, and the extremity of the feather is mottled. The lower part of the back and rump has a blending in about equal quantity of black and mottled plumage, each feather terminating in claret colour. The only white in the plumage is a spot on the shoulders, similar to that exhibited by both sexes of the black grouse, and some markings of that colour on the vent feathers. Under tail coverts black, mottled, with rich reddish-brown at their tips. . . . Mr. Sabine and Mr. Eyton describe their hybrid specimens as bred between the cock pheasant and grey hen. But that the produce is as likely to occur from the opposite sexes of those species is indicated by the following circumstance. A black-cock, a few years ago in the possession of my friend, William Sinclaire, Esq., of Belfast, having been kept along with a cock and two hen pheasants, beat and drove away the cock whenever he approached the hens in spring, and, as a brood of pheasants was wanted, had to be removed to another inclosure. The black-cock at the same time displayed towards these hen pheasants all the

attitudes by which, in a wild state, the attention of the females of his own species is attracted. The naked scarlet skin above each eye was so protruded and prominent as to give the head somewhat of a crested appearance, and the finely arched tail was thrown up like that of the turkey-cock when strutting about in his pride. The love call, so loud as to be heard at a great distance, was almost incessantly uttered.'[1]

An instance in which a pheasant cock paired with a grey hen in a state of freedom was recorded by the late Dr. Moore. A single hybrid was obtained by their union. M. Suchetet has lately drawn attention to the curious fact that, although the pheasant and blackgame have been proved to produce hybrid offspring in upwards of thirty separate instances in Great Britain, these mule birds remained entirely unknown upon the Continent until about eleven years ago.

During the last days of November 1884 a strange bird made its appearance in the park of the château of Jeltech, in Silesia, into which it had probably strayed in search of food. No blackgame had been seen in the vicinity for five-and-twenty years, though pheasants were plentiful enough. The *rara avis* was shot by a gardener, and proved to be a hybrid between the pheasant and black-grouse. It was a female bird.

[1] *Natural History of Ireland*, vol. iii. p. 43.

A second specimen was procured in Bohemia in 1886, and sent to the Royal Museum. It was a fine cock bird. A pheasantry had been established in the neighbourhood of Zèle in a portion of a wood much frequented by blackgame; the pheasants had thus been brought into contact with the black-grouse, and this hybrid was the result of some irregular alliance. Dr. Fritsch considered that a pheasant had been the male parent of this bird.

Before quitting the subject of pheasant hybrids, some mention must be made of the capercailzie interbreeding with the pheasant. Mr. James Lumsden, of Arden, recorded the first authenticated instance of such a mule, on the strength of a specimen shot at Arden, Dumbartonshire, on November 8, 1890: 'It was observed feeding in a corn field along with some pheasants, and on being disturbed ran a considerable distance before taking wing. It shows very clearly the characteristics of both species in both plumage and shape. So far as I know, this is the first instance of those species breeding together, and it would be interesting if we could state with certainty how the hybrid is bred. We have, however, no proof of this, and it is impossible to say if it is between a capercailzie cock and pheasant hen or the reverse. When shooting the wood near where it was shot we saw both cock and

hen capercailzie and pheasants, but came upon no more hybrids.'[1]

This singular bird was further examined by Mr. W. Eagle Clarke, who pronounced it to resemble a cock capercailzie in general appearance, but to possess a pheasant's tail: 'The head is that of a cock capercailzie, but the bill is rather weak, and the cheeks are naked below the eye, as in the cock pheasant; the beard, however, is well developed. The tarsus is only feathered on its upper part, the lower three-fourths or more being scutellate, and bearing a nodule in the place of the Phasianine spur. The toes are also mainly those of the pheasant, for only the faintest trace is to be found of the lateral horny processes so characteristic of *Tetrao*. The tail is decidedly cuneate in form, but not so pronouncedly so as in the pheasant, and consists of eighteen feathers. In colour the feathers of the crown and hind neck are green, with yellowish-grey margins; the sides of the face green, with dull yellow patches; feathers of the abdomen and sides with two dull yellow bars and a broad terminal margin of green, giving a blotched appearance, the green largely predominating. The back and scapulars resemble those of a cock capercailzie, but the vermiculations on the feathers are coarser and of

[1] *Scottish Naturalist*, third series, 1891, p. 38.

a dull yellowish tinge. The tail feathers are barred with pale brown on a black ground, and are broadly edged with black. The wings are a mixture of dull yellow and black, and the primaries, on their outer margins, are barred with pale brown, as in the pheasant ; the white shoulder mark of the male capercailzie is conspicuous.[1]

[1] *Scottish Naturalist*, third series, 1891, p. 39.

CHAPTER IV

OLD-WORLD FOWLING

THE subject of fowling is closely related to the life history of birds, because no one is likely to succeed in trapping or snaring birds until he has first made himself fully acquainted with the habits and haunts of his intended prey. The various devices for capturing birds which are practised in different parts of the world have long engaged my attention. I hope to speak of them more fully at some future date.

The pheasants of the Caucasus are chiefly captured by the old-fashioned method of setting snares in their runs (a destructive if simple engine), or in specially prepared pitfalls. Di Valli, who wrote in 1601, was wicked enough to suggest that hen pheasants could easily be snared upon their nests. Olina, who followed Di Valli twenty years later and appropriated most of his text, advises that pheasants should be snared in the spring-time, when the birds seek their mates for pairing purposes (if we may speak of a polygamous

bird as choosing to pair). A French writer on sport, M. Audot, recognises three methods of poaching pheasants in France. As for the first, 'il consiste, lorsqu'ils ont remarqué l'arbre où se perche un faisan pour passer la nuit, ce qui est très facile, puisqu'il se décèle lui-même par son cri, à brûler une mèche soufrée, qu'ils attachent au bout d'un bâton, afin de l'élever, et de faire arriver plus vite au faisan la vapeur qui s'en exhale. Elle l'étourdit tellement qu'il chancelle bientôt sur sa branche, et tombe enfin au pied de l'arbre.' There will be more to say about this ruse in the next chapter.

Another method named by M. Audot requires the use of snares. He informs us that, in order to ascertain whether the pheasants really frequent the runs attributed to them in the coverts, it is advisable to sprinkle some oats or other grain in the supposed tracks of these birds. If the poacher finds that this bait is consumed by the pheasants, he proceeds to set a series of horsehair nooses in their runs. These are made of twenty-four hairs plaited together, and are placed at proper distances apart. One is hung upright and the next horizontally; the success of this device is increased by the precaution of stopping up all the gaps and holes with bushes, except those in which snares are set. Some more corn is then sprinkled

about, 'de façon que les faisans, en trouvant là une plus grande quantité, s'appellent les uns les autres, et se prennent ou par le cou ou par les pattes.'

Another plan described by this writer is to find out where the pheasants are in the habit of drinking, which being ascertained, the poacher fixes snares in the tracks which the birds follow to the water. To satisfy oneself and spare useless labour it is best to employ the following precaution: If you find what you suppose to be the tracks of a pheasant leading to the water, you should disturb the soil, and render it loose. If the pheasant is in the habit of using it, he will leave the fresh imprints of his toes in the soft soil upon the occasion of his next visit. If he gives you this palpable proof of his passing that way, the next thing to do is to place snares or a net to intercept his passage.

Savi states that the Tuscan peasants used to set snares for pheasants in a variety of places. Sometimes they fixed them in the ditches which these birds were observed to frequent; sometimes they arranged them round the birds' watering places, or set them out in the stubble fields; they were equally adept at hanging snares in the runs which the birds made in bushy places.

English poachers have informed me that they set

their snares for pheasants in the runs which these birds make in the hedgerows, or near a stack yard which the creatures visit. They do not use horse-hair, preferring to trust to a single or double strand of fine copper wire.

The third of M. Audot's methods of poaching pheasants is to capture them in nets. The most important of these is the *hallier*, a big triple net, the central portion being known as the *nappe* or *toile*, in contrast to the net which hangs on each side, called the *aumée*. The *hallier* is suspended between tall poles, which are fixed in the earth at proper intervals. The *pochette* is a more portable net, in the form of a purse or bag, about three feet in length between the rings, whether intended to catch pheasants or partridges; but for the former bird a mesh of three inches is preferred, whereas that of the *pochette à perdrix* only measures two inches. When the French poacher discovers traces of pheasants in a wood, he sets a very short *hallier* in their way, allowing the lower end of the net to hang loosely on the ground. But the sport must not be left to chance. If one of these birds happens to be caught in the net, he makes an outcry, and alarms any other pheasants that may happen to be in the vicinity. The poacher therefore takes care to remain in the vicinity of his net, with

the intention of securing and silencing the birds as soon as they are captured. The *pochette* is used in the same way to bar the runs of the pheasant through the brushwood. Pheasants, in France at any rate, wander abroad three times a day in search of food—in the morning when the sun is rising, about 11 A.M. or noon, and again about two hours before sunset. It is at such times as these that the poacher sets nets in the way of the birds.

One of my favourite authors is Alexander Neckam, the foster-brother of Richard Cœur-de-Lion. The treatise which he compiled, 'De Naturis Rerum,' has been pronounced to be 'an interesting monument of the history of science in Western Europe, and especially in England, during the latter half of the twelfth century.' The eulogy which Neckam bestows upon the pheasants is accompanied by a terse but pithy description of a mediæval method of netting the male of this bird. The fowlers work in company, not alone. When a couple of men have decided to go out catching pheasants, they provide themselves with a net and a dummy pheasant. The latter is painted up to represent a cock pheasant. Having marked down a wild pheasant, the fowlers put out their dummy, and hasten to conceal themselves. The male pheasant is naturally a very jealous bird, so he

hastens to attack his supposed rival. The fowler who has taken charge of the dummy makes it appear to retire and return until he has drawn the wild bird, unconscious of danger, within reach of the net which his companion stands ready to throw over it.

> Nam gallus, galli delusus imagine picta,
> Audax certamen temptat inire novum.
> Nunc simulando fugam, nunc accedendo recedit,
> Auceps sic voti competit ales eum.

By far the most detailed and interesting account of 'the taking of pheasants with nets' that I have come across so far, in our own mother tongue, is that given by Markham in his tiny duodecimo volume, entitled 'Hunger's Prevention; or, the whole Art of Fowling by Water and Land,' published in London in 1655. The work itself is so rare that I found it very difficult to obtain a copy for my library. A good deal of the substance of this work was copied into Willoughby's 'Ornithology,' by John Ray; but even that is a tolerably scarce book, and seldom seen in private libraries. I shall therefore endeavour to reproduce some of Markham's 'waies to take pheasants' without any further apology:

'To speak then of the manner of taking the Pheasants, you shall understand that it is to be done three severall waies; that is to say, with Nets, with

the Lime-bush, or else with other particular Engines, of which there are divers kinds and do carry divers shapes, according to the seasons of the year when they are used, and the manner of the place in which they must be used, as shall be at large declared hereafter.' He next discusses 'the nature of the Pheasant:' 'for the taking of the Pheasant with Nettes, it is to be done either generally or particularly: Generally, as when you take the whole eye of Pheasants, that is to say, the old, the young, and altogether, the old Cock, the old Henne, and all their poots as they flock and runne together in the thick and obscure woods; or particularly when you take none but the old Pheasants, or such young Pheasants as are come to the age of coupling and payring, so as you can have no hope with your Nettes to strike at more then (*sic*) one Pheasant or two at the most at one instant or fixed time, for these kind of birds are of a melancholy, sadde and sullen disposition, and after once they be coupled and paired together, doe no more keep in flocks, or companies together, but live separated and asunder from other paires.'

We are next instructed as to 'the generall taking of Pheasants with netts:' 'When therefore you shall intend to put in practise this generall way of taking of Pheasants with netts, which (as before I said) is to

take the whole Eye of Pheasants both young and old, and altogether without any reservation, you shall then first of all learn to know the haunts of Pheasants, and their usuall and common places of breeding; otherwise doe what you can, your work will be frustrate and your labour spent in vain.' Markham therefore sets himself to describe the 'Haunts of Pheasants:' 'The haunts then wherein Pheasants naturally doe abide and breed are not in open and plain Fields (for their fears are so great, and their cowardlynesse so much, that they dare not live without covert or shelter), nor yet under the covert of Corn-fields, low shrubes or bushes, neither yet in tall high Woods, where every Tree may fitly be imployed for Timber. But in thick young coppses well grown, and ready for ordinary sail of small bushwood, Poales and the like, having been divers years reserved from the haunts of Cattell of all kindes, and from the tracing and paths of mens feet: by reason of which solitarynesse and safenesse, the Pheasants take great delight herein, and will here above all other places breed and bring forth her young ones, provided that it be ever thick grown and obscure, for if it be otherwise thin, plain, and passable, she will neither breed, nor come near it, for she accounts the strength of her covert to be her only safety.'

After this dissertation, Markham undertakes to

teach us 'How to finde the Eye of Pheasants:' 'Now when you have thus found out the haunts and breeding places of the Pheasant, then your next care is to finde out the Eye or brood of Pheasants, which you may doe sundry waies: as first by your eye, in searching up and down those haunts, and viewing the bushes and trees and other obscure places, where for the most part they reside, and where you shall see them flock and runne together in companies and heaps, as it were so many Chickins after the Henne; or else by rising early in the Morning, or comming late in the Evening, and observing how and when the old Cock and Henne calleth to the young ones, and then how the young ones answer back unto them again, and so from that found to direct your path as near as you can to the place where they meet and gather together, lying there down so close and secretly, that by no means you may be discerned, but that you may take a true observation how they meet, and how they lodge together, that from thence you may take a true knowledge, both how, where, which way and after what manner to pitch your Netts, and with what advantage both of wind and weather, for the gaining of your purpose.' He suggests, however, that 'if it so fall out, that either by your own want of knowledge in this kind of practise, or through any other naturall

imbecility either in your eye or eare, that neither of these waies sort with your liking, but seem either too tedious or too difficult; then the most certainest, readiest and easiest way for the finding out of this pleasure, is to have an absolute, perfect, and naturall Pheasant call, of which you must both by practise, and the instruction of the most skilful in that Art, not onely learn all the severall notes and tunes which the Pheasant useth, but also the severall and distinct application of them, and the time when, and to what purpose she useth them; as whether it be to cluck them together when she would broode them, to call them to food and meat when she hath found it, to chide them when they straggle too farre, or to call them together and to make them rejoyce and wanton about her, and to labour and seek for their own livings: for any of all which she hath a severall Note or tune.'

Markham promises to treat of the bird-call in a particular chapter, but the intention is never carried out. He does, however, admonish us as to the best times for using the pheasant-call: 'Now here is to be understood, that albeit these two particular times of the day, as the earliest of the Morning and the latest of the evening are the best times of the day for the use of the call, and the finding out of the Pheasants, whether it be by couples, or otherwise the whole

Eye or company; yet neverthelesse, they are not the only and alone times, but you may as well use the call any time in the forenoon after the Sunne rise, or any time in the afternoone before Sunne set, by altering and exchanging onely your note or tune, for as before Sunne rise and at Sunne set your note is to call them to their foode or to give them libertie to range; so your notes after Sunne rise and before Sunne set, which are called the forenoone and afternoone notes, must be to clucke them together, and to bring them to brood, as also to chide them for their straggling, and to put them in feare of some danger ensuing. As for the notes of rejoycing or playing they may bee used at any time, yet not so much for the discovery of these young Pheasants, as for the finding out of the old couples, when they are separated and gone any distance one from another, whether it be for foode, through affright, or any other naturall or casuall occasions whatsoever, as every hower hapneth to these feareful and cowardly creatures.'

Markham proceeds to read us a lecture on 'The manner of using the Call:' 'Having thus,' he says, 'the perfect use of your Call, and the observation of the right howers and seasons, being come to the hauntes (that is to say into the aforesaide thicke Copsies and Underwoods), and having ranged

through the same into the places most likely and best promising for your purpose, which you shall know by the strength of the undergrowth, the obscurenesse, darknesse, and solitarinesse of the place, you shall then lodge your selfe so close as is possible, and then drawing forth your Call, beginne to call first softly and in a very low tune or note (lest the Phesants be lodged too near you, and then a sudden loude note may affright them), but if nothing reply or call back again to you, then raise your note higher and higher, till you make your call speake to the uttermost compasse; provided that by no meanes you overstrain it in the least degree, or make it speake out of tune, for that were to lose all your labour, and to give the Fowl knowledge of your deceit, whereas keeping it in a most true pitch, and a naturall tune, if there be a Pheasant in all the wood that comes within the compasse of the sound thereof, shee will presently make answer, and call backe again unto you, and that in your own note also, and as loud and shrill in every proportion. Now as soon as you heare this, answer or report backe againe, if you finde it come farre, and is but one single voyce and no more, then shall you as close and secretly as you can by degrees, steale and creepe nearer and nearer unto it, still ever and anon applying your Call, and you shall finde that the

Pheasant which answereth you will also come nearer and nearer unto you, which as soon as you perceive, you shall then observe that the nearer and nearer you meete, the lower and lower you make your Call to speake, for so you shall perceive the Phesant herself to doe, and her in all points as near as you can you must imitate, and thus doing, in the end you shall get sight of the Phesant, either on the ground or on the pearch, that is upon the boughs of some small Tree, as it were prying and seeking where shee may finde you, which as soon as you perceive, you shall then cease from calling a space; and then as secretly and as speedily as you can, see you spread your Nettes in the most convenient place you can finde betwixt your selfe and the Phesant, over the toppes of the lowest shrubbes and bushes making one end of your Net fast to the ground, and holding the other end by a long line in your hand, by which when anything straineth it, you may draw the Net close together, or at least into a hollow compasse, which done you shall call again, and then as soon as you perceive the Pheasant to come just under your Net, then you shall rise up and shew your selfe, that by giving the Pheasant an affright hee may offer to mount, and so be presently taken and intangled within your Net.'

Markham instructs next how to take a number of

pheasants at one time. The method to be adopted only differs from that just described inasmuch as several pairs of nets are to be used instead of a single pair. The fowler is advised to apply his call 'till all the pheasants be commed underneath your Nettes, and then boldly discover your selfe and give the affright to make them mount, which done, take them out of the Nettes, and dispose of them at your pleasure.' The method just described of 'calling' pheasants and then driving them up into nets suspended among the bushes is that upon which our author seems to rely most confidently. I am sorry to have to add that his counsels do not end here. In the very next paragraph he describes 'another manner of taking these pheasants with Nettes (but it must bee onely when they are very younge) when they are called pootes, or pheasant poots, and not altogether pheasants, and this manner of taking is called driving of pheasants.'

The success of this sport depends upon two considerations: the care with which the fowler conceals himself, and the judgment with which he avoids all rashness and hasty action. Markham hints that the fowler should take some pains to disguise himself: 'it shall not be amisse for you if you weare over all your face a hood of some greene light stuffe as sutable as you can to the leaves of the trees, having

onely loope-holes for your eyes and nostrills ; And also about your head if you wear a wreath of Oaken leaves or other leaves, it will be very good, and will take up the eyes of the birdes from greater suspitions, as also if you trym and hang your garments with branches and leaves of trees, it will be very available and bring your worke to effect sooner and better.'

As for the actual 'driving' of the birds, the operator is directed to furnish himself with an instrument called a 'Driver,' consisting of seven 'good strong white wandes or Ozyers, such as basket-makers doe use,' fixed firmly in a wooden handle, and preserved in the shape of an open fan by a double binding of finer twigs. Thus accoutred, the fowler goes to work according to the following instructions : 'First, you shall either by the Art of your eye, still in their haunts, diligence in search, or else by the cunning of your Call, finde out the Eye of pheasants, bee they great or small, and assoone as you have found out any one of them, you shall then (alwaies taking the wind with you for they will naturally runne downe the winde) place your Nettes crosse the little paddes and waies which you see they have made, and padled in the woodes (for they will make little tracks almost like sheeps trackes) and as neere as you can come to some speciall haunte of theirs, which you shall know by the barennesse of the

ground, mutings and loose feathers which you shall finde there, and these Nets you shall hollow, loose and circular wise, the nether part thereof being fastened close to the ground, and the upper side lying hollow loose and bending, so that when anything rusheth into it, it might fall and intangle them.'

The fowler is then admonished to call the birds together with his call until such time as 'they are all come in, and doe beginne to cloocke and peepe one to another.' The bird-call is now laid aside, and the driver comes into play. 'With this driver (as soon as you see the Pheasants gathered together) you shall take and make a gentle noise upon the boughes and Bushes which shall be round about you, which as soon as the poutes doe heare, they will presently runne in a heap together from it as fast as they can a little way, and then stand and listen, keeping all as close together as can be (for then they dare not scatter)and then you shall give another racke or two, at which they will runne againe as before, and thus by racking, and dashing upon the small trees and bushes, you shal drive them like so many sheepe before you, which way or whither you please, and if at any time they chance to goe that way which you would not have them, then you shall crosse them, and making a noise with racking, as it were in their faces, they will presently

turne and goe as you would have them, for against the noise they dare not come for their lives, and thus you shall not cease driving them by little and little till you have brought them altogether in one flock wholy into your Nets, in which they will run with all eagernesse till they be so intangled, that not any one can escape, but will all rest at your mercy to dispose according to your own pleasure.'

Markham next dilates upon a method of catching pheasants with birdlime. He advocates that the top branches of young willow trees should be utilised for this purpose. The twigs are to be made sharp, so that they can either be placed in the ground, or placed among the bushes through which the pheasants usually run. 'Also if you see any little smal trees, whereon the Pheasant useth commonly to pearch, if on them and neer to the branch which she makes her pearch, you place two or three of these bushes, and prick them so that she can neither spread her wings to light on, nor yet take her wings to fly off without touching some of them, you shall be sure the Pheasant can hardly or never escape your taking.'

This discourse winds up with an amusing warning against making any unkind comparison 'betweene the use of the Nettes, and the use of these Lime roddes.' To give any pre-eminence to either of these

methods were needless, and could serve no practical end: 'they are both of equall vertue and goodnesse, and have indeed each of them their distinct times and seasons for their severall imployments; for you shall here understand that those Lime-roddes or the use of Lime is onelye for the winter season, as from the beginning of *Novemb.* at which time every tree hath shed his leafe, and every byrd is content to pearch upon the twigs, which are the very figures and Emblems of Lime-twigs, until the beginning of *May*, at which time on the contrary part every Tree is budded and doth begin to spread and open his leafe, so as all birdes may couch and hide themselves under the covert and shaddowes of the same, and the true use of the Nets are from the beginning of *May* when Trees are leaved, until the latter end of *October* when every tree doth shed and loose his leafe, so there is no time of the year more then the very time of ingendring, but may be exercised in this pleasure, whence what profit may arise I leave to be judged by those which keep good Houses, and such as have good stomacks.'

Another mediæval method of sport, upon which we have not yet touched, is that of shooting pheasants with the cross-bow. I have a strong impression that the Italians used to shoot at roosting pheasants with the bow on bright moonlight nights. Whether I am

right or not in throwing out this suggestion, there need be no doubt that the practice of shooting 'tree'd' pheasants, which I described in the second chapter, had its exact parallel in Europe before our modern guns were invented.

The other day I happened to spend a spare half-hour in one of the galleries of the Louvre which possesses a fine variety of pictures illustrating the chase. One of the points which the trophies of gay chasseurs thus depicted are apparently designed to exemplify is the nonchalance with which a true Gallic Nimrod 'pots' as *gibier* anything which carries a few feathers. Thus, a day's sport is represented on a large canvas as including a brace of wild duck, a great bustard, a woodcock, two chaffinches and a brambling, a curlew, and a great spotted woodpecker! The picture, however, which interested me most is one which represents a fine cock pheasant (of the good old red type) perching complacently in a tree, which he shares with a brilliant golden oriole. A great spotted woodpecker is drawn in flight, and a couple of dogs stand together at the base of the tree, evidently waiting for their master to arrive and shoot the bird which they have forced to take to a tree.

As a practical comment upon this, I may quote a few words from Professor Newton's recently published

'Dictionary of Birds.' 'Formerly,' he writes, 'pheasants were taken in snares or nets, and by hawking; but the cross-bow was also used, and the better to obtain a "sitting shot," for with that weapon men had not learnt to shoot flying, dogs appear to have been employed in the way indicated by the lines under an engraving by Hollar, who died in 1677:

> The Feasant Cocke the woods doth most frequent,
> Where Spaniells spring and pearche him by the sent.'

The foregoing pages have, I think, accounted for most of the old-fashioned methods of fowling for pheasants; but there can be no doubt that other 'wrinkles,' if they deserve the name, are to be picked up occasionally in rural districts by those who can win the confidence of our English peasantry. I have often had described to me the effect of steeping grain in strong spirits, this 'doctored' stuff being placed on the feeding grounds of pheasants and other birds; but whether any serious credence is to be attached to this I do not know. There can, however, be no doubt as to the use of horsehairs for catching pheasants, though I have no reason to suppose that such a device is extensively employed.

My information was taken down from the lips of an original sinner named Adam, to whom the serpent came in the form of a small farmer, in whose service

he was working. The farmer was much annoyed at the havoc which the pheasants of a neighbouring squire wrought in his newly sown barley. 'Now, Adam,' says he, 'we'll *have* some of them there pheasants! We might as well have a lot of cocks and hens as them. I know a quiff that'll stop them from coming and eating our barley!' So the two conspirators set to their nefarious work. First of all, they procured from the farmer's wife a quantity of white peas. These they steeped in water until they were soft, when they pierced every pea with a sewing needle. The next step was to insert stout horsehairs into the peas, crossways, cutting off the ends of the hair, so that the bristles only protruded half an inch on each side of the pea. Finally, the men proceeded to sprinkle the peas upon the surface of the ground which had been sown with barley. Adam assured me that when he returned to the spot on the following morning he found no fewer than eleven fine pheasant cocks placed *hors de combat*, the fatal bristles having stuck in their throats until the birds became exhausted by their efforts to swallow the bitter-sweets prepared for them. The pheasants, as Adam phrased it, were 'superannuated,' and allowed themselves to be secured without difficulty. Adam was 'flait to take them, because 'twas out o' season,' but those eleven pheasants were

never seen again in the Squire's coverts. It was in the spring of the year that they came to their mournful end, a fact which reminds me of another piece of what the schoolmen would have called 'original' wickedness.

Male pheasants, as most people will admit, are extremely pugnacious in spring time, and readily attack any male rival that may happen to venture upon their territory. When the pastime of fighting cocks was accepted as a fashionable amusement, country folk used to divert themselves by pitting a properly accoutred gamecock against the pheasant of the woodlands. The game fowl, armed with spurs, was turned loose in the vicinity of a cock pheasant, which he of course proceeded to challenge to mortal combat. The luckless pheasant ran to the fray, into which he rushed with fury, only to be cut down by the cruel weapons provided for his assailant in this unequal combat.

CHAPTER V

POACHING IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY STYLE

THE various devices for capturing wild pheasants which we glanced at in the last chapter possessed the virtue of being both quaint and curious; most of them, however, belonged in a great measure to the Middle Ages. Such of their number as happen to have survived the march of modern progress and are still extant could hardly be practised by anyone except professing members of a guild of poachers.

I have often wondered, by the way, from what source the terms 'poach' and 'poacher' came to be embodied in the English vocabulary. The dictionaries refer us to a French verb, *pocher*, which really does seem to have supplied the old English word 'poche,' 'poatch' or 'potche,' signifying to thrust at or stab. Shakespeare puts this word into the mouth of Tullus Aufidius in the camp of the Volsci, when he exclaims:

I thought to crush him in an equal force
True sword to sword, I'll poach at him some way
Or wrath or craft may get him.

Coriolanus, act i. scene x.

Carew employs the word *poche* in a kindred sense. 'The flowk, sole and plaice follow the tide up into the fresh rivers, where at low water the country people *poche* them with an instrument something like a salmon's spear.' Of course poachers *may* sometimes destroy pheasants by spearing them while the birds are at roost; an old village blacksmith assured me that, when a working apprentice, he was once required to make some small spears, which he believed to be intended for the purpose of 'clicking' or spearing pheasants. The probability, however, is that the word 'poacher' is akin to the French *poche*, a pocket, and was suggested in its English dress by the capacious inside pockets which poachers find it necessary to provide to their coats or jackets.

But our French neighbours are strangers to this enlargement of the term which their language has lent to us. The word they use is *braconnier*, and it carries with it a full share of obloquy. Its etymology is simple enough. It is derived from the substantive *braque*, a sporting dog. The diminutive of *braque* is *bracon*, and the servant who took charge of his master's dogs was, therefore, dubbed the *braconnier*.

The word *fauconnier*, Anglicè falconer, is based upon the title of the *faucon* which that dependant carried on his wrist. But while the meaning of the term *fauconnier* remains unaltered, that of *braconnier* has changed. Originally it was an honourable term, but the lad left in charge of the dogs so often hunted game on his own account, that his usual title became recognised as the sobriquet of the rascal whom our German friends frankly call the *wilddieb*—i.e. the game-thief. After all it does not very much matter what we *call* the poacher; his existence is an undoubted evil, about which there can be no difference of opinion.

Charles Diguet, a well-known authority upon French sport, thinks that poachers should be divided into two classes, represented respectively by the men who use the gun and those who use snares. The gunning poacher watches at the corner of the woods at dawn or shortly before nightfall, in the hopes of intercepting a stray roe or perhaps a plump brown hare. Diguet maintains that the poacher who uses a gun is a less troublesome ruffian than the man who sets snares; he bases his opinion on his experience that the poacher who does his deadly work with a firearm seldom kills more than one head of game at a time, and that he is more easily detected than the poacher who works silently. I fancy that the majority

of English keepers cherish a very special objection to armed marauders, and no wonder, for the butt-end of a gun is a murderous weapon in a *mêlée*.

There is nothing peculiarly national in the practice of shooting roosting pheasants. Poachers of other races do the same as the Saxon in this respect. Savi tells us that in Tuscany the peasants of his day (he wrote sixty years ago) were in the practice of shooting the roosters: 'On a winter's night, when the trees are entirely stripped of their foliage, the poachers wend their way, armed with guns, through the oppressive silence of the woods, carefully scrutinising the trees; if the night happens to be clear, they, with the practice which they have acquired, easily distinguish the pheasants roosting on the branches of the trees, for they generally occupy a position which enables a mortal blow to be delivered.'

The habits of pheasants, by the way, are modified as much by local circumstances as those of other game birds. I asked a Perthshire keeper, who observes the traits of all the wild creatures on his ground very closely, what trees he thought the pheasants found most suitable as their nightly shelter. His answer was that the birds which he watched generally chose to roost in oaks or larch trees. He added, that he had himself seen as many as eighteen phea-

sants perching at one and the same time in a large tree.

As to the *modus operandi* of shooting sleeping pheasants, my information is derived at first hand from a countryman, who admitted to me, after a close cross-examination, that in his youth he had been induced by older men to join them in their nocturnal forays. He told me that the gang he worked with made it their business to watch the movements of the keepers, so that they might begin their malpractices when the keepers were off their beat. The members of the gang decided beforehand upon the precise coverts they were to visit, and the line of country to be followed. They often initiated their adventures by approaching a watcher's house, and shooting any hand-reared and half-tame pheasants which might be about. After firing two or three simultaneous shots, the poachers picked up and pouched their victims. They then ran across country a mile or so to some other covert, in which they resumed operations. When that had been rifled they hastened to another and another, until they had satisfied their lawless longings, and were glad to return home with their long-tailed spoils.

It is impossible to feel anything but disgust in the contemplation of such villany as that just

described; yet I venture to say that most sportsmen may find some amusement in listening to the yarns which a really clever poacher can relate. Take, for instance, the case of a Gallic rascal, Philippe Devaux, who once flourished in the forest of Compiègne. He was a native of the village of Armaincourt. His trade, or occupation, was dressing vines; but he took care to spend more time among the pheasants of the forest than in the midst of the strip of vineyard which he had inherited from his parents. An accident which cost him his left thumb early conferred upon him the nickname of *Sans Pouce*, or the man without a thumb. Under this professional title he was known to the whole countryside.

At the beginning of his career, and before he had made his mark as a poacher, Sans Pouce used to carry his felonious implements beneath his loose cotton blouse. They consisted of a small and light fowling piece, a phosphoric tinder box, and a lantern. He ranged the forest just as he liked, but he preferred to shoot over those parts of it which abutted upon the high road to Paris. Whenever this fellow marked a roosting pheasant, he halted for a quarter of an hour to ascertain whether anyone else was in the vicinity. If his fears were allayed, he took a careful aim at his victim. His gun was too lightly charged to

be heard at any great distance; but, as he made a rule of only shooting at close quarters, any pheasant that Sans Pouce honoured with his selection was sure to fall. It was at once picked up, wrapped in a linen bag, and stowed away along with the gun at the foot of a tree. Sans Pouce immediately betook himself to the public road, lighted his lantern, and marched along the middle of the road, talking aloud to himself, as people often do when they are alone and feel nervous. If a patrol or keeper happened to hear the gun fired, and ran to the place, he never guessed that the peasant whom he met coming from the direction of the shot, talking noisily, and carrying a lighted lantern, could be the poacher of whom he was in search; he was therefore certain to ask Sans Pouce for information. Sans Pouce never failed to retort that he had seen the men who fired the shot running away in the opposite direction to that which he was following himself. The keeper at once set off in the wrong direction in search of the imaginary offenders. As soon as he saw his enemy out of the way, Sans Pouce used to slip back into the forest, pick up his gun and bird, and start in quest of a second quarry. He was not particularly greedy, and seldom troubled to kill more than a brace of birds in an evening. 'It was this *moderation*,' as his biographer naively

observes, which rendered it so difficult for the authorities to catch him.

However, Fortune is notoriously fickle, and she did not always smile upon Sans Pouce. For example, it happened on a certain winter's day that the keepers noticed the track of a man's shoes in the half-frozen snow of the forest. They followed these imprints until they came to a thick holly tree. Here their keen eyes, trained in woodcraft, saw that the dead leaves which covered the ground had been moved and heaped together, with the view of concealing some object which had been slipped beneath the bush; as soon as they closely scrutinised the pile of leaves, they recognised the butt-end of a gun. The keepers, being anxious to catch the knave to whom the gun belonged, proceeded to hide among the holly bushes which stood around. There they remained immovable for many hours, when they sought the assistance of their mates. A watch was subsequently maintained for two whole days. At last, on the third night, Sans Pouce himself arrived upon the scene, intending, of course, to recover his gun. But hardly had he knelt down to pull the weapon out of the brushwood, when the three keepers threw themselves upon him, and he was obliged to surrender.

'Comet' is or was the slang phrase by which a

French poacher designates a pheasant, and with Sans Pouce, of course, this expression was current coin. On one occasion he engaged two assistants to join him in levying toll upon a certain well-stocked cover, in the supposed absence of the keepers. The keepers, however, stopped at home, and captured the raiders red-handed. The case went to court. The poachers were sentenced to pay a hundred francs apiece as fines, a second hundred francs as damages, and to forfeit their guns. When Sans Pouce quitted the Court-house he remarked aloud, so that all might hear, that this little misadventure would cost him another eighty 'comets' to repair.

Here I may remark that if keepers are really intelligent, and accustom themselves to track out birds and beasts by the impressions which their feet have left in damp or loose soil, they can often ascertain the movements of a poacher by the casts of his boots.

An associate of Sans Pouce came to grief in this way. In order to reduce the risk of discovery to a minimum degree, the Frenchman mounted a pair of shoes upon two pieces of wood. Supporting himself on these extemporised stilts, the rascal visited all the best stocked coverts of the neighbourhood with impunity. The keepers, seeing nothing upon the

ground except the ruts made by the rude stilts, lived for a long time without any suspicion, never guessing that a poacher was daily thinning out the number of their birds. The fellow carried on his malpractices for a long time with complete success. At last there came a day when the keepers paid a surprise visit to his house, in search of some wood which had been purloined. As luck would have it, they stumbled across his stilts, and the secret leaked out.

This very individual sometimes dared to poach in the forest in broad daylight, almost under the eyes of the keepers. Like Peace, the English burglar, this cunning Frenchman was an adept in the art of 'making up,' and could disguise himself by painting in imaginary wrinkles with such skill and deftness that no one could take him for anybody but an old beggar woman. He never appeared to the public to be doing anything but collecting sticks; all the same, he took care to carry a small fowling-piece underneath his petticoat. It fared ill with any game that he came across; but he was too adroit to be caught *flagrante delicto*. If a keeper heard a shot in the forest, and ran up to the spot, he found nobody to apprehend; only, at the end of the nearest cross-road, he might meet an old crone, carrying a bundle of fagots or of dead heather. 'Please give a trifle to poor Gertrude,'

she would whine in a sorrowful tone ; it often happened that a keeper, being completely taken in, would divide his lunch with the old lady, or would fumble in his pocket for a few loose coins, little reckoning that he bestowed these acts of charity upon the thief who was stealing his game.

By the way, an English poacher whom I sounded upon this subject, confessed to me that he was in the habit of aiming at the head of the pheasant which he had marked at roost. The reason for this is obvious. The quill feathers of the wing are dense, and repel stray shots ; while if the bird is only pricked in the body, it flies away, to pass the night skulking forlornly in the shelter of some ditch or beneath a hedgerow. On the other hand, if the bird is missed, it is sure to be too scared to perch in a tree a second time during a single evening ; so that the poacher, to be successful in his ill-doing, must mark his bird right carefully, for if he makes a mistake he will not repair it afterwards.

Most of the poachers who have given me their confidences upon this subject believed firmly that pheasants could be obtained by 'smoking'—i.e. by being overpowered by the fumes of burning sulphur. Good old Squire Waterton discredited this method. 'I consider,' he says, 'the smoking of pheasants while

they are roosting in the tree as a mere idle story. I myself ought to be a pretty good hand at poaching; still, I am obliged to confess that I have never been successful in one single instance in the many attempts I have made to bring down the pheasant from his roost by the application of a smoking apparatus. Indeed, when we reflect that the mouth of the bird is always shut during sleep, and that both it and the nostrils are buried in the dorsal feathers, we are at a loss to conceive how the smoke can enter them and cause the bird to fall in stupefaction. If smoking were a successful method, depend upon it the poachers would never be such noodles as to use a gun, the report of which is sure to bring an attentive keeper up to the scene of their night's diversion.[1]

I cannot say for myself that I ever emulated the example of Squire Waterton in trying to 'smoke' pheasants, but it is always interesting to study the habits and customs of our fellow-countrymen. In the pursuit of knowledge I have interviewed a good many scoundrels, as well as many virtuous individuals, and I am bound to admit that the balance of evidence at my disposal points to the 'smoking' of a pheasant as a feat within the reach of the skill of 'professional gentlemen.' What the poachers have told me amounts

[1] London's *Magazine of Natural History*, vi. 310.

to this—that they occasionally smoke pheasants, but more as a lark than as a remunerative piece of business. The apparatus required is nothing more than a long bamboo, an empty tin, such as is used to hold condensed milk, and a little sulphur. The latter is placed in the tin, which hangs on a nail at the end of the bamboo. Several lengths of bamboo, which fit together, are more easily carried than one long stick. A dark and quiet night is indispensable to the successful 'smoking' of pheasants. If there be any wind, the sulphur fumes would be blown away from the bird. An experienced practitioner is generally told off to work the sulphur box, which must not be held too near the pheasant, for fear the unwonted warmth should disturb the bird. If adroitly handled, the fumes of the burning sulphur '*stove*' or suffocate the victim for the nonce, and it drops to the ground choking.

Cock pheasants are said to be more wary at their roost than their female companions. Perhaps the latter rely intuitively upon the watchfulness of the male birds.

Professor Giglioli tells me that poachers in the north of Italy sometimes kill roosting pheasants with a blowtube. I have no experience of such weapons, but no doubt they would be very destructive if skilfully employed.

But night poaching is not the most vexatious form of stealing game, and even if it were, measures can be taken to reduce it to a minimum. The game preserver usually suffers most from bad neighbours. Perhaps a small farmer has a strip of land surrounded by well-stocked coverts. If he is a man of small scruples, he may help himself to the squire's pheasants without incurring serious risk. Amateur poachers of this kind must be treated with and bought over by friendly overtures.

There is a good story of a French sportsman, the Prince of Condé, which will illustrate the force of this. A certain citizen of Senlis had begged that the post of rate collector might be given to his son, but the candidate was rejected. He sought to enlist the influence of the Prince, but received a peremptory refusal, as the Prince regarded the political views of the family with disapprobation. A family council was held by the relatives, who happened to possess some properties which bordered upon the preserves of the Prince. All the lad's relations gave him legal authority to kill game on their land with gun, dogs, snares, or in any other way that he could devise. Day and night the young man shot upon the confines of the Prince's land. As soon as ever a head of game left that domain its fate was sealed. One day a brace of pheasants

would be killed, the next day a roe, and the day after a half-grown wild boar dropped to the rejected candidate's gun. The keepers were furious, and the sportsman drove them to despair by exaggerating his slaughter. Fresh reports reached the Prince from day to day. 'How is it,' he asked his favourite keeper, 'that you do not find some means of freeing me from this scoundrel?' 'Alas!' the keeper answered, 'the fellow always stays upon his own ground, and we cannot get hold of him. Only yesterday he shot three pheasants before my face!'

A stag hunt had been arranged for the morning of the following day. The hunters assembled and were about to start, when a keeper arrived to report that the stag which they had hoped to course had been shot by the poacher above named. The Prince burst into a furious rage, and drove off in his carriage to interview the King himself. When he arrived at the Tuileries, his dress disordered and his manner confused, Charles X. inquired the cause of his disturbed state. He at once broke out into a tirade against poachers, and the sovereign listened with sympathy to his description of the murdered stag. Twenty minutes after, the Lord Chancellor appeared in the Tuileries, obedient to a royal mandate. After hearing all the facts, this high functionary decided that the poacher had only acted

within his legal rights. 'Cannot we get rid of him in some way?' asked the Prince. 'If he were a public official, he could be transferred to another post,' said the Chancellor. 'What a bright idea!' exclaimed the Prince; 'he has asked for a post—give him one as far off as possible, say, in the Hautes-Pyrénées. He can kill plenty of ibex there. Only let him start off at once, and do not let them give him any leave of absence to return home.' So the difficulty was solved in a manner acceptable to both parties. The Prince kept his game in peace and safety, while the collector of taxes divided his time between the duties of his new post and the more exciting pleasures of tracking ibex on the high snowfields.

SHOOTING THE PHEASANT

BY

A. J. STUART-WORTLEY

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CHAPTER I

PRINCE AND PEASANT, PEER AND PHEASANT

No; he has not the poetry of the partridge, nor the romance of the grouse. He is a fowl, a barn-door fowl!—a tame polygamous foreign bird, that, like the Cochin-China or the Guinea, can be tended by an old woman or caught by a boy. Those who shoot him perform no feat; they are not sportsmen—only specimens of the decadent aristocracy or inflated plutocracy of England; the 'battue' is a foreign horror, the shooter no longer an English gentleman, but a Parisian 'gommeux.' The bird, if he can fly so far as to deserve the name, is but a stranger from the southern Palæarctic region, imported like the rich stuffs which screen the entrance to my lady's boudoir, to add another false note to the discord of modern civilisation; fatted on the products of the honest farmer's toil to swell the banquet of a prince or grace the orgie of an Anonyma.

Here is no sound food, like chicory or margarine,

for the sovereign people, but an unnatural outlet for wasteful wealth, reared on the savings of the poor and needy, on the sweat of hardy toilers, for whom the gaol for ever yawns if haply they should touch a feather of this precious bird, luxury sacred to the lord and the landgrabber.

Away with the degenerate class of humanity which delights to nurture this exotic, unnecessary creature, and having done so, to let loose all the predatory and bloodthirsty instincts of savage man, and butcher it wholesale! Away with this dainty; let us have food, money, and land for the people, and be rid of the idle vicious class who, living in their sybarite fashion on the rack-rented peasantry, consume ill-gotten wealth in such debasing pursuits as fox hunting and pheasant shooting!

But stay—this will not quite do; let us look at the pheasant from some other points of view. He is more English than you think, nay, than most of us, for was he not brought over by the Romans, who saw in the forests of old Britain a new home for the Asiatic bird, which must be served for the feasts of Lollius and Caractacus, or even of Cæsar himself? You have not seen him, as I have, roaming at his wild will over the heaths of Norfolk, or in the wooded glens of Scotland, in the hop gardens of Kent, or the

sheltering coombs of Devon, or you would not call him foreign.

Look through the white fog at that object on the stubble near the fence, sad coloured and dark, it seems just like a large clod of British earth ; but, lo ! a golden gleam bursts through the cold haze, and as we clatter past on the iron-bound road, blowing on our fingers, and huddled in our coat collars, we see the dark object turn, and raise to the winter sun the glittering emerald neck, the burnished collar and jewelled breast of the most brilliant of British birds, the lordly cock pheasant, strutting proudly, with his strong feet, inch-long spurs, and tapering tail, to find his varied breakfast.

See him again, under the giant oaks, amid the strewn dead leaves, recalling the sheen of gilt or copper vessels among the rusty red of Indian stuffs ; or picking his way daintily and fearlessly among the traceries of the frozen parterre, perhaps even on the terrace under the great windows, where he shines a resplendent note of colour, as it were a Sèvres or Dresden china vase in a stone hall.

Again, look where, his short strong wings expanded on the bosom of a rushing northerly blast, he sails high above the oak and larch to where the bitterness of death possibly awaits him in the valley. But no,

he is too good for you, my lords and gentlemen, and not one of the six barrels belched forth at him from three experienced gunners can touch him in his lordly flight over his ancestral domain.

Once more see him, as he breaks from a huge hedgerow, along which he has kept man and dog racing for three hundred yards, rise like a firework in the October sun, make off secure across the marsh to the opposite belt, and there run so far and fast in its trackless recesses that you may never trace or find him.

Observe him again in his death; see the burnished plumage, ruffled in the grimy hand of a London carman, brilliant against the damp blackness of a November night, 'carriage paid' from the country station to the stuffy little suburban home.

Again look where, just before Christmas, the crowd presses and jostles along the great alleys and narrow ways of Leadenhall Market, staring at the hecatombs of game and fowl of all kinds, stumbling over pheasants in hampers, pheasants in boxes, pheasants and all other game on the ground amongst the sand and straw and feathers, pheasants in long endless rows on hooks, their gilded breasts glittering under the electric light, the long array of tails waving and shivering in the chill east wind. See the bustle

and the trade; the great carts outside disgorging their loads of game from Northern and Eastern and Western Railways, other vans filling up with large boxes and crates for Southern lines, for Paris, Monte Carlo, or Rome. And mark the price—three or four shillings for the bonny, delicate bird that has cost the much-abused country landlord ten or more. How can a man be reviled by any political economist for placing an article of food upon the market at one-third of what it has cost him to produce?

Look in another direction. See the village inn, the village shop, and the cottage hearth, and listen to the jubilation over the hard money and good cheer that close the big week's shooting at the Hall. What joyous little streams of extra wealth have flowed from its generous portals to the surrounding homesteads; and would they ever flow if it were not for the famous high pheasants in the valley, below the great clumps and belts that shelter the pasturage of the park, or the crops on the uplands? Ask at the post office, the county bank, the market town, and the railway station.

But I have not done yet. Turn your eyes to Birmingham, and see the busy hands at work upon stocks, locks and barrels, rods, loading machines and extractors; to the brilliant workshops of St. James's or

Bond Street, where the skilled artisan at the bench perfects the polished barrel, or files to the nicety of a thousandth part of an inch the grooves and slots of the cunning breech ; where hard by, in other crowded rooms, cartridges by the million are stowed in boxes by the thousand, while outside carmen and porters struggle under their weight to load and unload vans—the railway vans, that they may reach the country in good time. See the tall shot towers by the Thames, where the molten lead ceaselessly drops at varying heights into the water, and the stout canvas bags, marked from 'Dust' to S.S.G., are for ever being sewn up, stored, and sent away.

Think of the great powder mills, where 'black' and 'diamond grain,' Schultze, E.C., and many other nitro-compounds are ever employing the heavy hand of labour and the brains of science and chemistry ; of the huge factories of Eley, with their many thousand pounds' worth of unrivalled machinery and plant; where millions upon millions of green and blue, gas-tight and brass cartridges are turned out faultless every year, and where wages and employment never fail. Again, think of the packing-case makers, paper-makers and workers in leather, canvas, waterproof and metals, who toil in the East-end of London or the factories of many another busy town. Think of the

corn exchanges of Mark Lane, of the hay, grain, and poultry markets of the provincial borough. Think, in short, of all the money, English and foreign, which filters its sure way through the devious channels of trade to the pockets of the labourer in the village or the artisan in the town. And though you cannot say that the pheasant alone is responsible for all this for he shares it with partridge and grouse, hare and rabbit, deer and wildfowl, yet, since he roosts in his thousands nearest our homes, since he is bred and nurtured, brought to the gun, the larder, the market, and the table in greater profusion and in fairer style in this country than in any other, has he no right, foreigner and barn-door fowl though he may be called, to claim some share of the industry and commerce, the solid gains and prosperous exchanges, which follow in the train of the British love of shooting and all other field sports?

But you and I see even more than all these things, you and I who have travelled together, in wondrous luxury or unadulterated discomfort, over the varied surface of this exiguous planet, this plenteous mother earth. You and I, born and nurtured under the fog-borne chime of Big Ben, or the shriller, sweeter stroke of the old stable clock in a country manor-house, but who have seen together the dust of

Calcutta and the glitter of Cairo, the veneer of Boston and the natural graces of Tahiti, the sweat of the diggers in Ballarat or of the Kaffirs in the South African Rand; who have, on our return journey, once more sipped our coffee and savoured our unearned luxuries under the shadow of the Coliseum, or over the reflected glories of the Grand Canal; who have clapped our hands in applause where the electric gleams illumine the snows of Petersburg, or the gas-glare tinges with midnight gold the verdure and bloom of the Champs-Elysées' chestnuts—what do we come back to?

We have seen the setting sun gild the fretted marble of the Taj Mahal, or the simple pillars of the Parthenon; light with rose beams the rugged snowy outline of the Rockies, or flash with prismatic glory from the great chandeliers of the Salle des Glaces; we have travelled and seen the world from China to Peru, and yet—where and how do we wish to live? In an English country home!

As the pheasant picks his dainty, graceful way across the well-kept garden, we count him not the least picturesque and appropriate incident in the lovely scene; as we should glance at the jewel pattern in the gallery of Hatfield, the tapestries on the walls of Blenheim, the cunningly carved friezes of Chatsworth.

There, as he shines in the sun, and picks the forgotten sunflower seed from the upturned earth, or scratches the acorn from the russet leaf-carpet, he seems no stranger, he is no exotic. He is a part and parcel of the greatest and most refined prize the earth affords—the possession of an English estate. The lapse of centuries, since the Roman legions camped on the slopes of Wimbledon or the wolds of York, have not dulled the wild blood which he brought with him from the Mongolian forests, nor dispossessed him from the glades and dells, the heaths and uplands of Merry England which he has made his own.

Must all this go? For, surely, if the pheasant goes, if an English sport or pastime disappears, so dear, so much more vital than the superficial critic thinks to the existence of the country gentleman, and to the prosperity of his dependants, then must the great estates go also: the lordly parks and castles, the generous hospitality, the wide charity, the benevolent despotism which lightens the burdens, while it never curbs the liberty, of the denizens of so many peaceful villages in England; the enterprise, commerce and instruction, the protection, justice and standard of life, which should, and mostly do, radiate from a great English country house—then must all these things go also. Where depopulation and waste lands do not

follow, will be larger towns; larger centres, that is, of misery, of artificial and stunted life, or great areas of semi-detached villas and small grasping trade, in which the suburban spirit will leave to a handful of hardworked parsons and eccentric philanthropists the task of looking after the poverty it has itself engendered, but which is greater and deeper than its own fancied importance and prosperity.

You will perchance ask, what has the pheasant, in his own person as a bird, to do with all this? There will, you may say, always be wild heaths or scraps of forest, where the true sportsman, the hardy hunter, may pursue that which is wild; and is he not a better man than the luxurious shooter of hand-reared pheasants?

True; but how long would it be before these heaths and wastes would be bare; bare to the naturalist and the sportsman as Clapham Common or Hyde Park? The pheasant would disappear almost the first, before the partridge or the snipe, even as the hare is exterminated before the rabbit. So fine a bird, heavy and valuable, easy to see and circumvent, is always the greatest prize to the greedy pothunter or poacher, and would not long survive. And why should the woods and copses, the heaths and brakes be barren of this gorgeous bird life, this natural and picturesque product of their wealth?

The persons who, because they are unable or unwilling to take part in it, are never weary of reiterating that pheasant shooting is not sport, and therefore a cruel and effeminate pursuit, are right in a sense that they do not themselves intend to convey, and entirely wrong in the conclusion they draw.

Pheasant shooting is not sport; that is, it is not, under modern conditions, a contest between man and a wild animal difficult to find, circumvent and secure. But it is a very excellent pastime, and one which, conducted without cruelty, the possessor of land and money has a right to enjoy if he pleases, the inviolate right of a British subject to do what he likes with his own, so long as in so doing he does not break the law or inflict injury on others.

True, it is hardly accessible to the poor man; yet the majority of poor men are the better for its existence, as I have tried to show. Deep and loud would be the curses from many a humble home in town and country were this so-called debasing sport, which is in reality an important industry, abolished by that enemy of mankind, the self-seeking, vainglorious, insincere, ignorant person known nowadays as a 'faddist.'

We who enjoy it do not dream of calling ourselves 'sportsmen' because we take part in a few weeks'

pheasant shooting. Perhaps we do not hanker after the term so much as is supposed, since we are compelled to share it with every member of the Fleet Street betting clubs or of the professional ring. Yet we know that most of the men who have proved their right to the title all over the world, in the jungles of India or the ice-bound plains of the Pamirs, the deserts of Africa or the prairies of the Far West, on the mountains, seas and rivers of both hemispheres, are keen enough to join in well-managed pheasant shooting; and we claim the right to enjoy it, bringing thereto the British qualities of courtesy and fair play; while, without laying claim to the powers of a Hawker or a Selous, we take our part in this well-ordered pursuit in the invigorating air of our own land, doing no injury, but some benefit, to our neighbours, and not really meriting abuse from those who constantly attack others for their own ends.

To the charge of cruelty so often brought against those who join in slaying large quantities of game it is more worth while to reply than to the self-constituted arbiters of 'sport;' since there are many right-thinking persons who, not understanding the conditions, ascribe to its votaries a kind of bloodthirsty desire to cause the death of harmless animals with a complete indifference to their sufferings. It does not

occur to them, and unless the matter be explained there is no reason why it should, that the shooter is usually a humane man, and that outdoor exercise, the cultivation of health, and the acquirement of skill, have more to do with his love of shooting than any desire to become the executioner of beast or bird life. Then, as regards the pain inflicted on the birds, it should be remembered that the game bird is accorded a very happy lot in this world. His birth, rearing and comfort are well looked after, the best of food and water provided for him, while, so far as possible, he is protected from his natural enemies, the predatory and carnivorous birds, beasts, and reptiles, against whom a never-ceasing war is waged in his behalf. Finally, he has at most but one or two short days, often but one or two moments, of anxiety, terror, or fear of death, while the latter is mostly inflicted on him in the most instantaneous and painless form. Which of us, say, in middle life, can assert as much of the lives of our human fellow-creatures? I think altogether a pheasant on a well-preserved estate has a happier existence and easier death than any creature I know of; and though these birds are thus called into existence, reared and protected solely for the benefit of man, yet they are not conscious of this, nor of the fact that were it not for man they would never have existed.

To all that I have said it may be urged that there is no attack at present upon field sports, and that I may be beating the air in thus putting forth a defence. But let us be warned in time. An organised attack is being prepared and has already begun upon every recreation and amusement which is beyond the reach of the more struggling and less fortunate mass of humanity. The cry is being used, despite the fact that all these things are good for trade, and that poverty would be deeper and more widespread in their absence, to foster the discontent that can so easily be excited among those who are less prosperous than their fellows.

If steadily resisted by those whose knowledge and experience of British sports enables them to state the simple truth, this attack is doomed to failure in the end, and it may once more be shown that those who pretend to find a panacea for the hardships of the many by curtailing the enjoyments of the few are as ignorant as they are spiteful and unscrupulous.

I was lately shooting on an estate where, from vicissitudes of ownership, the game preservation had been sadly let down, in a part of the country where agricultural distress has been specially acute, and where the soil, though poor for crops, is admirably suited for timber and game. The population was scanty and ill cared for;

everything betokened neglect and poverty, where a totally different condition of things should have reigned. I would undertake that under an owner with liberal ideas of game preserving up to date, seconded by an intelligent keeper, this very estate should command in three or four years' time a higher value in game than it has produced during this century in agriculture. I will make bold to say that a man who rears pheasants by the thousand is a benefactor to the community at large, far more so than the pothouse agitator who abuses him, and who is only to be finally silenced by being elected to a seat in a Parliament where he is completely outclassed.

The best allies to the cause of British sports and recreations, and of game preserving in particular, are largely those of whom Britain has most reason to be proud; those who by their energy and industry in various walks of life at home or in our colonies and foreign lands have, while raising themselves, contributed to maintain the high standard which marks the progress of a great nation.

The man who wins his way to the top in trade or finance at home, or whose name commands respect in law or medicine, art or mechanics, no less than the pioneer of mining, exploration or military glory all over the world, the working brain which develops

the great railways, and the famous lines of ocean steamships, or maintains the thousand industrial enterprises over which the Union Jack floats by land and sea, will come back, for the goal of his ambition, for the reward of his toil, to a home of his own in the lovely English country.

He will want, let us hope, for many a long year to come, all the familiar sweets and accessories of opulent country life. As he stands at his window, with all the luxuries of modern civilisation under his roof, and the slanting rays of the winter sun lighting the purple tree trunks and the grey-green pastures of the homelike landscape before him, he will spy our friend the cock pheasant, gently wandering round for beech mast and acorns, and recognise in him the last and not the least expression of the comfort and plenty which is the reward of the successful man.

He will tend him with care, shoot him with the respect due to his ancestry and power of wing, and eat him with the pride of possession and gratitude for the good things of this life.

CHAPTER II

HOW TO SHOW PHEASANTS

A DELIGHTFUL expression is attributed to a head keeper of the last generation, named Flatman, who was, I believe, in the service of Lord Sefton. He was placing the guns for a great rise out of one of the well-stocked coverts of Croxteth, and in assigning to a gun his position, outside the covert and on the flank, he said, 'Would you please stay here, sir, and *when the trouble begins*, be good enough to move up nearer to the other guns.'

Quaint as this term sounds, it is marvellously expressive, in a sense not intended by Flatman, of the difficulty which besets and usually baffles keepers in showing a quantity of pheasants in the proper manner. There are plenty of keepers in England capable, in proportion to the climate and soil of their particular locality, and to the expenses allowed them by their employers, of rearing, preserving, and producing a large stock of these birds ; but there are

very few indeed who know how to show them when they have been produced. There, to quote Flatman, 'the trouble begins.' Some brilliant examples I have seen, whose names, though I prefer not to institute unnecessary comparisons by citing them, will occur to many experienced shooters. Such men, having a natural gift of generalship and organisation, enter absolutely into the spirit of the pursuit, as viewed by the practised gunners who take part in it; and are perfectly able, without referring any question of management to their employers, to carry out the heaviest day's covert shooting in a practical manner, without losing sight of what I may term the sportsmanlike or picturesque side of the subject.

The choice of a head keeper is a difficult matter, and is too often decided in favour of the man with powerful frame and large voice. These are useful, though far from the only essentials; and I have long held the opinion that, for many important reasons, the position of a head gamekeeper on a considerable estate should be entrusted only to men of a higher stamp of education and ability than is commonly the case.

The policy which should guide his actions with reference to delicate questions of tenancy, neighbourhood and labour I have treated in another chapter; but the management of covert shooting equally

demands ability of a higher order than is usually found in the British gamekeeper.

However able the generals, the commander-in-chief—by whom I mean the owner of the shooting—should, if possible, have the first and last word as to how he wishes his pheasants shown, and his guns placed to kill them. Times have changed, pheasants are vastly more numerous than they were, and shooting has improved. The natural result is that the average shooter cares more (far more if he be *above* the average) how the birds are put over his head, than how many are killed. A sufficient quantity he expects, and in these days feels pretty sure of seeing; but to see 'high birds,' and to be properly placed to kill them if he can, is to him the great desideratum in pheasant shooting.

The great principle, advocated over and over again by all the recognised authorities (*vide* Badminton Library, &c.), is to utilise the *running* powers of the bird to take him to the point, whence you will use his flying powers to bring him overhead, if possible, back in the direction of his home. But, like many other things well recommended by the really experienced judges, this principle is only too often ignored, and it is painfully common to see guns placed in the obsolete manner, close round the end or corner of a covert on

low or flat ground, with a bloodthirsty keeper pushing pheasants out into the faces of the embarrassed shooters. This is usually done in deference to his ignorant desire that a heavy bag should be made; and, in modern days at least, usually defeats its own object. It is first necessary to understand that more, not fewer, birds will be killed if put over the guns at a fair distance than if driven past them at a close one. Modern shooters have, as a rule, mastered the first principles of courtesy and safety, and it is only the typical foreign count, or the small provincial gunner, who only get one day's covert shooting in the year, who can be induced to maim, slay, and smash a quantity of slow pheasants at close quarters. We are all supposed to do it—in some of the daily papers; as a matter of fact we do not, and, what is more, we do not intend to. However much the owner or keeper may desire a large total, he is not likely to get it in this way, for no practised shot worthy of the name will even shoot at birds flying too low and too close.

I have said that the first principle is to push pheasants on their feet as far as possible, and bring them back on the wing. In this way you may be sure of getting them to fly well in the homeward direction, and can therefore intercept them as you wish. But, whether you drive them from home or

towards it, there is a second cardinal principle to be observed if you wish them to pass your guns, either at the fair killing distance, or at a sufficient height to make the performance interesting, and test the skill of your best shots. This is, that they must be flushed at a certain distance from the guns. In no case should the flushing point be nearer than sixty yards from the line where the shooters stand; it will be immeasurably better if it is well over a hundred. Add to this that the birds should generally, where possible, be flushed from higher ground than that on which the guns stand, and you get all conditions necessary for the result desired.

Lord Walsingham has laid down all these principles in the Badminton volume, and added a recommendation, in which I entirely agree, of the system of driving the birds (away from home) to an isolated covert or clump, from which they can be brought back overhead easily and surely. To such clump or covert they must be pushed almost entirely on their feet; but the system—for which I think we are all, in the first instance, indebted to Lord Leicester, who has for nearly fifty years practised it, with the most scientific and picturesque results, at Holkham involves absolute discipline on the part of both beaters and shooters. You may bring pheasants, as they do at

Holkham, a mile, or even two, through continuous belts or covert, and push them out of an open end to the isolated clump, across an open piece of ground. But the farther they get from home, the more nervous they become, and great caution is necessary. They are more and more inclined to turn back; and should your advancing line once get too close to them, they will flush in a body and come back all together over your head, leaving you, after one abortive fusillade, with nothing to do but to beat the whole covert over again, and only a few brace of birds to show.

As you walk on, the person directing the operation, be he host or keeper, must have complete and absolute command of the line, and should he see, as he readily will if it occurs, that the line of men is getting too close to the birds (which, when some distance from home, will be running somewhat fitfully and unwillingly before you), he must call a general halt to give them time to run on. Following the invariable characteristic of their nature when disturbed or alarmed, they will gradually do this, and you may then slowly advance again.

Now, when you get near, say, a hundred and fifty yards from the end of the covert—which in this case should be completely open, with no fence or thicket if possible—the line must be halted absolutely, and a

general noise, shouting, and rattling of sticks must be kept up.

Gradually the older birds, cocks first, will lead the way across the open to the nearest shelter, that being the clump or spinney into which you wish to put them, and when once this exodus has begun, provided that your line keeps stationary, you are safe; the mass of pheasants will go on, even over obstacles, such as fences, ditches, or broken covert, flying, skimming, and running, until, when like a more famous general you order the whole line to advance, every bird is safely sheltered in the detached covert in front of you.

Previously to this, to follow the Holkham plan to the letter, a wire netting should have been placed, in semicircular form, round the outside of the clump. This will keep the birds from running out of it on the far side, and will have been acting as a stop to the hares, should you be lucky enough to have any, while you were beating up the covert.

At Holkham no one is allowed to shoot a pheasant during the beat towards the clump, excepting a cock that turns back over the line; but this, of course, would render the advance rather monotonous where there were no woodcocks or ground-game. The whole of this historic performance takes place there

within the limits of the park, which, however, as it is nearly ten miles round, inclosed by a wall and a ring or belt of covert, and embraces within its ample inclosure some hundreds of acres of arable land, besides pasture, with many detached coverts and spinneys, affords a chance for this method of beating which might be considered exceptional. But to satisfy himself, and to show others that the management of pheasants on this principle is not dependent on the inclosure of a walled-in park, Lord Leicester on one occasion, instead of driving his birds into the famous 'Scarborough' clump, put them all, to the number of 1,500 or 1,600, *over the wall*, into an osier bed outside the park, which the great majority of the pheasants could never have seen before.

This is an extraordinary performance; but the same great authority is wont to declare that he could drive his pheasants into his billiard-room if he were so minded, and that so long as you guide and push them gently, without springing them, you can do what you like with them.

Of course, when the birds are once all housed in the clump, a few stops are put round it to keep them in, and the party can then eat their luncheon, and afterwards at their ease take their stands for the rise out of the clump. The 'Scarborough' clump is only

an acre or so in extent, but it will hold 2,000 pheasants, and every bird will come back in the direction from which he was driven, some rising to a great height, and sorely puzzling the back row of guns, which can here be placed in three lines.

A pheasant's flight, it may be observed, consists invariably of a rise, more or less gradual, to a certain zenith, after reaching which a gradual sailing process, with a downward tendency, begins. He hardly ever flies along a level course, but is always either rising or trending downwards. This is one of the reasons that makes him so difficult to kill properly, except when he is just at the zenith.

At 'Scarborough' clump the pheasant's zenith is reached when over the first or second line of guns, and by the time he is over the third he has begun that downward sail with wings extended motionless which is universally admitted, when pheasants are high overhead, to afford one of the most difficult shots one can have to deal with. Lord Leicester says he has never seen anyone make a good average of kills when standing in the back row at 'Scarborough' clump, and I can well believe it.

I offer no apology for citing and describing the method of beating the woods and placing the guns at Holkham, any more than I should, were I writing on

racing, for dwelling upon what is done at Newmarket. For more years, probably, than could be counted at any other place in England, this question has been studied and practised to perfection on this the king of shooting estates. More pheasants have been killed in a day at other places, and, though only once, more partridges; but for both these combined, as well as for ground-game, wildfowl, wood-pigeons, woodcocks, or any other kind of English game but grouse, the large acreage, climate, soil, and management of Holkham have for years placed its owner in the position of being able, if so minded, to equal or eclipse all other records.

It will at once be remarked that most places have not the same advantages, and that what answers in a locality so especially favourable to game in general, and this method of beating woods in particular, would not be equally practicable elsewhere. To this my answer would be that, allowing for different formation of coverts, and more especially considering the possibility of easily altering such coverts so as to suit your pheasant shooting, I have never yet seen a place where the main principle here quoted would not hold good, or where something like the same conditions could not be reproduced.

If you have no detached covert, spinney, or clump outside your principal wood, it is usually easy to plant

one; and though you will not by this means get the much-desired lofty trees for many years, yet it is a well-ascertained fact that pheasants can and will rise very high out of low covert to fly back to the high wood, provided the lie of the ground favours the operation. By this I mean that the short covert used to flush the birds from must, at least, not lie lower than the main wood, and should, if possible, be slightly higher, when the desired result can be assured.

But to avoid the risk, which is always considerable when you are driving birds away from home for any distance, of their flushing in considerable numbers and turning back over the line, it is absolutely necessary to preserve the distance between your line and the pheasants running in front of you which I have described. In thick covert this is not easy, some are sure to squat and flush and go back; but by giving time, and making plenty of noise, it is wonderful how you can persuade them to slink and run away forward, even when the undergrowth is apparently dense.

To favour the operation, you must thin out the undergrowth near the end of the main covert, letting it die away, so to speak, at the edge into the open. It may very likely not be possible to do away with the fence at the end, but so long as this has plenty of open places at the bottom it will not stop the phea-

sants, while it is yet strong enough to keep out cattle or sheep. If there is a gate, and no stock in the adjoining field, the gate should be left standing open long before you begin to beat the covert, and the birds will readily run through it.

But, above all, you must halt the line and give plenty of time when you get to within 100 yards of the end, and keep up plenty of noise. This is the point most often neglected, and its omission accounts for the general confusion and springing of the birds in every direction, as well as for the objection probably urged by your keeper, that it is of no use trying to drive the pheasants in that direction, that he has tried it often, and they never will go, &c. &c.

Remember that, whatever the shape of your covert, pheasants can be driven almost anywhere so long as they are kept on their feet; which, reduced to a few words, means that you must not get so near them as to cause them to squat and flush. Lord Leicester's dictum about driving them into his billiard-room [1] is perfectly sound, and may be taken as the basis of the system on which you should proceed, whether your pheasants be many or few.

We will suppose that you have successfully accom-

[1] The billiard-room at Holkham is, needless to say, on the ground floor, and opens on to the garden with a wide door.

plished the manœuvre of pushing the birds out at the end of your main covert, and got them safely into the detached covert whence you wish to flush them ; it now remains to conclude artistically, and while showing good sport to your friends, to realise the fair and right proportion of the pheasants which have cost you so much care, expense and trouble to produce ; to have them killed and not butchered.

We will assume that the detached covert had already some birds in it, and that it has been well looked after since the morning, the outlying fences driven in, stops carefully placed, &c. You now place a row of stops on the hither side of the clump, as we will call it to distinguish it from the main covert, about fifteen yards apart and as many from the edge of the clump, who should gently tap their sticks. These will keep the birds from attempting to run out again, and also assist to make them rise into the air when flushed. The fence surrounding the clump should be thick, and needless to say the undergrowth as well, so that the birds cannot run together and get into crowds. You can then, by sending in one, two, or even three judicious men to put them up, push the pheasants over the guns in small numbers at a time, or even singly, almost as you wish. Your principal line of beaters is of course sent round to the far end of the

clump, and advanced very slowly as the pheasants thin out. Should the birds have come to the guns so often singly, or in such fashion that you think too many are being killed, you have only to press your line of beaters on a little to produce a flush which will have the double result of affording a very pretty sight, and of insuring the escape of a sufficient number for a second shooting and for stock.

Now as to placing your guns, sometimes a very simple thing, at others a delicate matter involving considerable diplomacy; founded on your knowledge of the comparative skill, the more or less trustworthy qualities, and the vanities or weaknesses of your guests.

The nearest line of guns, under the sort of circumstances I have tried to describe, should be about forty to fifty yards from the fence inclosing the clump, and be more in number than the rear line, say in the proportion of five to three where you have a large quantity of birds, or five to two where there are fewer.

If the form of the whole team be about equal, you must give them turn and turn about at different stands; but it is considerable odds that this will not be the case. Place the two or three weakest and most greedy[1] in the best places in the front line; this will

[1] The two qualities will often be found to go together in the same person.

please them ; place your best and most active behind them at, say, thirty to forty yards' distance, to nurse them. This position, from the implied compliment, and the sporting character of the shots they get, will please the latter. The outside places, often just as good as the centre, must be filled by the men whose shooting and temper can be relied on. But never commit the error, so often seen, of giving a man nothing but outside places all day because he is a bad shot, or possibly in the eyes of the world an insignificant person. An angel could not stand this, and I have seen the most sweet-tempered but inaccurate shooter goaded to madness, and converted into an enemy, by being denied the chance, perhaps during three or four days' shooting, of fairly participating in the amusement which has brought the party together.

You can always so nurse the position of an inferior shot that he cannot materially spoil the bag by bad shooting, and, besides, the amount of the bag should not, in pheasant shooting, be the primary consideration ; at any rate it cannot be calculated on as though every gun were to be a first-rate shot, unless you make a special effort to eclipse other records. This, if I may advise you, you had far better not attempt. To make the largest bag on record of pheasants in

England need be no object of ambition to anyone, since, granted a favourable soil, it is a mere question of how much money is spent upon rearing and feeding birds.

The guns in the back row should always be allowed to move about to a certain extent, so as to cover a good deal of ground, and to feel themselves at liberty to run in either direction to intercept any great burst of pheasants, or to keep in the main stream of the flight, which will vary somewhat according to which portion of the clump they are flushed from.

Keepers with good dogs should be posted in the main covert behind the guns, to pick up running birds or those which carry on and drop dead or severely wounded, both in the interests of humanity, and especially, where there are foxes, to rescue them from these midnight depredators.

The above method is, as I have said, the ideal one, and should be followed wherever practicable, whether on a large or a small scale, for it is almost as useful, as a principle, for small coverts or belts as for large woods.

But we must also consider how to apply it when it is not possible to have a detached clump or covert to deal with. In the first place, you can work it equally well should you have a heath or common

adjoining the covert, or even a turnip field where the crop affords good covert. Everyone must have noticed how high pheasants will rocket out of the latter when men are walking across it for partridges, or when it is being driven in by the beaters, and what splendid shots the pheasants would give to anyone standing under the wood they make for. Well, here is your opportunity; have no fear, but after first placing a few stops on the far side of the heath or turnips, and, as before, having well driven in all outlying hedgerows—a most important matter for securing the cocks, especially the old ones—boldly drive all your pheasants in the same manner as before, without heading them, out into the turnips. Place your guns in a line, with their backs to the wood, and about twenty yards from it, One or two, if the line be too long for the width of the field or heath, can back up the others as before, standing a little way in the wood. Now, let the whole line of beaters advance from the wood across the turnips for, say, seventy or eighty yards. Let the main body then fall out right and left, and go round to meet on the far side of the field or heath to bring it towards you, but leaving a proportion of their number, say, one man to every fifteen yards, to stand in line, as stops, right across the field.

The main body, having met on the far side, must

now advance very slowly, making sure of every bit of thick covert as they go. As the pheasants flush they will rise gradually, further incited to do so by the line of stops which they must pass over, and reach the zenith of their flight at about the edge of the wood that is, just over the guns, who will get all fairly high and some very difficult shots.

Few people have the courage to try this plan, so much so that in a somewhat large experience I have only seen it done twice when there were any quantity of pheasants, yet the risk of failure is *nil* where the trees of the main covert are high. It is only where the latter are young and low, or where the side of the wood next the turnip field or heath consists of thickets with no lofty timber, that the birds will ever fly in on a low level. Where the edge of the wood is of old timber trees, the higher the better, and where the centre of the covert has, as it should have, sheltering patches of spruce and fir near the feeding ground, the birds will rise high to clear the former, and make for the thicker shelter of the parts where they roost and feed.

Of course, if the turnip field lies higher than the covert, the difference of elevation will supply the place of the higher trees ; but in this case it will be found much more difficult to push the birds uphill out of the covert and into the turnips. There are some

coverts, usually small isolated ones, where no power on earth will induce the pheasants to fly on forward, but where their instinct is to turn back, or out at the sides, in order to come into the covert again behind you. In this case it should not be forgotten that the post of honour for your best guns is not forward, but with the beaters, and that the two outside positions are probably the best.

Let these guns, unless the covert is altogether too thick, walk with the beaters a little way inside the covert instead of outside it. They will be able to reach all that break out at the side to fly back, and inwards to the middle of the covert as well; whereas if they walk outside they will not be able to reach those flying back over the trees, they will not kill the ground-game, and can only be of use on one side. I have walked outside a covert parallel with the beaters many hundred times, and seen many others do so, but I never yet saw anyone have much shooting in that position. Guns are usually so placed from the keeper's idea that they dislike exertion of any kind, and are averse to going through the covert; whereas, provided it is not so thick that you cannot traverse it safely with the gun, or see to shoot, it is always pleasanter and more remunerative to the bag to walk inside.

The most detestable form of pheasant shooting is

when you are called upon to beat a large wood in a flat country, the birds being headed at the end of every one of the monotonous squares into which it is divided by narrow rides. This, however, one frequently sees, and one is usually told that it must be done this way so as to get the ground-game. I am quite convinced that you cannot realise properly from the rabbits and pheasants on the same day; and even if the destruction of the former be your principal object, this is a bad as well as a dangerous way to secure them. If the pheasants are your principal object, show your pheasants well in three or four good flushes, and let the rabbits take care of themselves. Enough will be killed for amusement, and you can make them the principal item of a later day, when you can afford to walk the wood in line and allow the pheasants to go where they please.

This is the only way to kill ground-game in covert safely and pleasantly; but when each beat in the wood is surrounded by guns ahead, guns at the side, and guns with the beaters, very few safe shots are obtained except at those which go back, no result proportionate to the amount of rabbits is realised, while the only shots at pheasants are low and unsatisfactory.

In a wood so formed, and without any detached covert to drive the birds forward into, let a definite

portion, end or corner, be reserved to represent a clump as far as possible. This must be thickened by undergrowth or false covert, or both; the former is far preferable, and should the rabbits be so numerous as to destroy it, wire netting can be kept round it all the year, and be taken up on the day before the shooting.

At the proper distance from this thick portion, which we will call the flush, and so planned as to intercept the line which the pheasants are most likely to take in making back into the main part of the wood, some sort of clearing, or, if possible, a broad ride, should be cut for a stand for the guns. It will not be found necessary to cut down every tree in this ride. The best and most ornamental may be left; but the undergrowth should be cleared, and may even be removed with advantage over a great part of the area between the stand and the flush. If the ground favours it, and the wood does not lie on an absolute flat, take advantage of any fall in the ground to get the stand on a lower level than the flush. Here place your guns in one line, or two, as before; only in this case you may very likely want one or two at the back or sides of the flush, with the beaters, especially in case there be an adjoining large wood which some birds may make for.

All this part of the business is simple enough; you

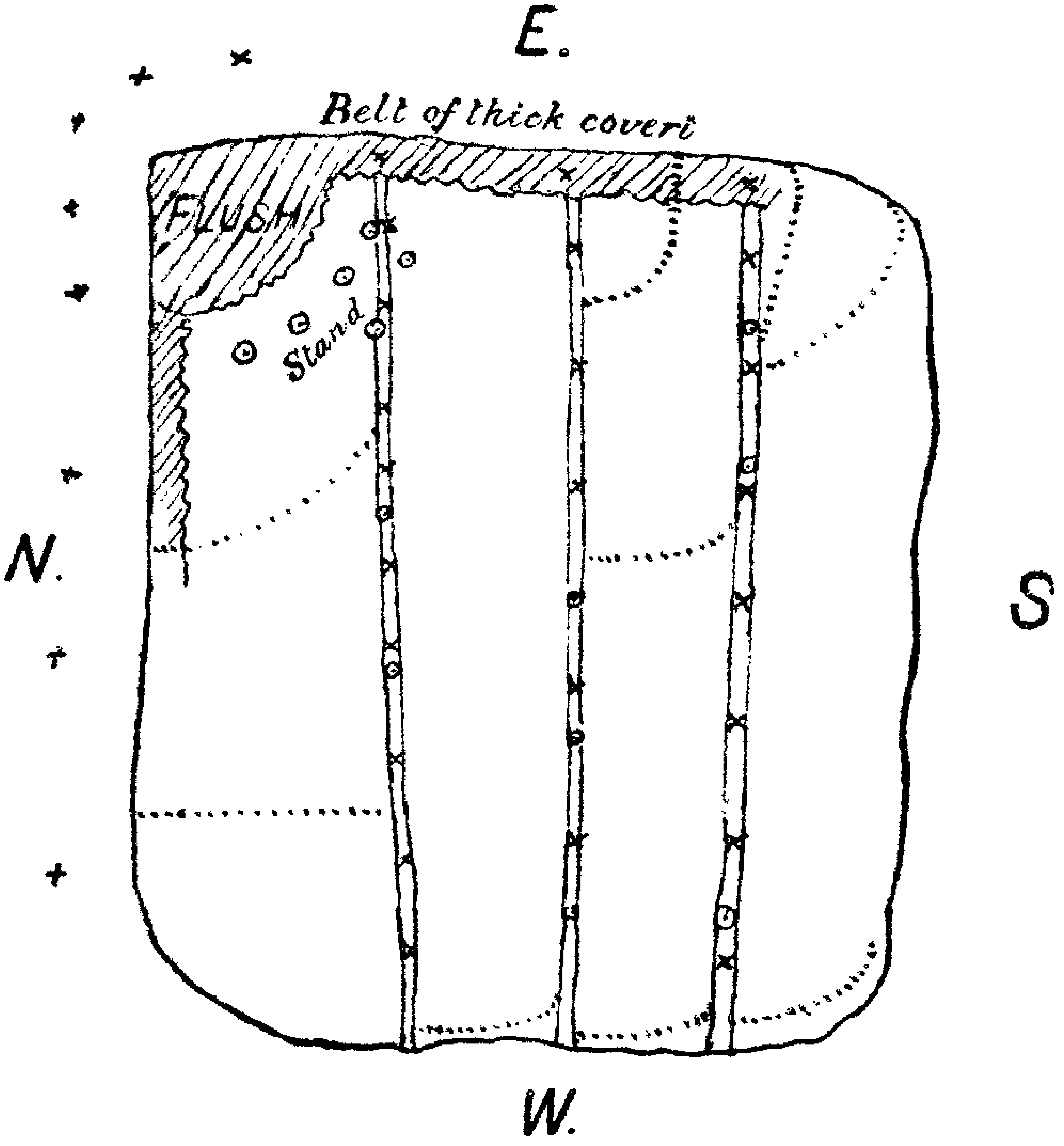
have, as you see, almost reproduced the conditions of the detached clump, and the stand for the guns; but to get the birds bodily into this clump, if the wood be a large square one, or of sufficient breadth and irregularity to require three, four, or even more beats, may be a difficult matter.

Here, again, your object will be to get them to run forward, till finally collected in the flush, without having been flushed or headed. You cannot cover the whole wood in one line, and must therefore take it in separate beats. These should be divided by rides, or strips, as they call them in some places, which need not be wide, and should have been made for the purpose of the shooting, without reference to any older rides, existing from the time of the wood being planted, which in all probability will not fit in with this system of beating.

Each beat must now be taken towards the same direction, which for the sake of clearness we will call the east end, being that at which the corner where you have made your flush is situated. Starting each time from the west end, your line will be wheeled each time up towards the flush, and will then return empty along the strip, leaving frequent stops, to recommence the next beat.

But it is here that I wish to point out what may be

novel to many of my readers, while it is very easy to carry out. All along the east end of the wood the covert must be thickened a little to facilitate the birds



× Stops left along rides after each beat.
⊙ Guns posted either at the stand or moving on the rides along the flank in advance of the line.
...... The line of guns and beaters as seen at different points.

running in shelter up to the flush. Most important of all, the strips must not be cut right through to the

east end, but so as to leave a belt, as it were, of, say, 30 yards wide or more. Each time you wheel the line, the birds in front of you, being given plenty of time as before, will run across in the shelter of this belt and towards the flush. Should the rides you use be old ones, running right through to the east edge of the wood, they must be made up or screened with artificial covert, so that the pheasants will not fear to cross. A careful stop or two must be left after each beat in this thick belt. In walking up each beat the right hand may be kept a little forward, and the wheel begun a good way before reaching the end.

By this means, still preserving the system of not getting too near the birds, they will be constantly pushed before you towards the east end, and then turned across towards the flush. You will not be able to do this in a wood of this shape without flushing a few here and there, some of which will break across to the end already beaten. To meet this, keep two or three guns always ahead of the line on the north side, leaving the south side, that towards the flush, always open.

In the last beat you will find a good many birds, and must go more gingerly than ever, with perhaps half your guns forward of the line on the north side;

but with proper care, especially towards the end, a burst should be avoided, and nearly every bird driven forward into the flush. You may then run a net or wire round the inside of the flush, and feel safe to post your guns and begin the rise at your ease.

Your greatest danger in beating your birds on this system—that is, in collecting them into a large mass, to be driven into a detached clump or to a flush within the covert—may come from foxes, and it is only fair to add that there are no foxes in Holkham Park. It is possible that a fox may get among the mass of birds just at the critical time, when they are about to cross into the flush, and if so he may spring a large number which will turn back over you; but here again, as you must risk something, the advantage of having no one ahead, and of your slow pace and the noise, will be apparent. If given time, and thoroughly alarmed, a fox is more likely to break covert and go away than when hemmed in and headed on all sides. When he does break, he may very likely run on into your detached covert, and so do you harm. I would therefore advise you in woods where you are pretty sure to find a fox, not to place the semicircular wire netting spoken of above round your clump, and to give your stops on the far side orders not to head the fox or holloa at him if he shows a disposition to break covert again

C
A
B

and go away on the opposite side. The unnecessary 'tally-ho' and holloaing by stops outside the covert is usually what induces a fox to cling closely to the covert in spite of the noise of guns and the advancing line.

One other simple instance of how to show pheasants I must point out. This is the common one, where it is necessary or desirable to make a stand and head the birds in a narrowish place between two woods, and where the ground slopes down each way to the stand. Here, if you push the birds in the conventional manner down to the end, you will observe the result shown at the point in the drawing opposite; that is, a quantity of low undesirable shots, disgusting the shooters placed in the hollow, who cannot from their cramped position get away from the birds, and who will, from reluctance to shoot, after smashing a few, allow the majority to fly on unharmed.

This is obviated by the simple expedient of placing a wire netting across the covert about 60 to 80 yards from the end, at the point B. The result then becomes, as seen at the point C, very pretty shots for the guns, standing in exactly the same position, and the birds are driven forward just as satisfactorily into the second covert, but minus the proper number realised; while two or three guns with the beaters will take care of all

that try to break back from the flush near the wire netting.

When beating coverts that hang on the side of steep hills, as on the Yorkshire wolds, or on other precipitous or hilly ground, you can be pretty sure of high rocketers, but you will get the maximum of high birds and the minimum of low ones if you plant and thicken the covert along the top side, and keep it thin on the lower. Then, as you beat along the face of the hill, keep the lower end of your line well forward, and the birds will have a tendency to run uphill all the time, and being flushed from the top, will give high and beautiful shots in whatever direction they fly.

In such localities as these, the detached clump system is hardly necessary: there should be no difficulty, by adhering to the principle given above and always flushing your birds off the higher part of the ground, in showing them to perfection.

It is in a flat, or only slightly undulating, country, perhaps not blest with tall trees, that the methods I have described will be found of most value. In so doing I have carefully avoided advising anything impracticable or theoretic; but those who have hitherto found a difficulty in showing their birds well, and who are inclined to try new methods to meet the views of the modern gunner, must bear in mind that

the judicious use of the woodman's axe, a moderate knowledge of forestry, combined with experience of the ways of pheasants, will help greatly, without disfiguring or undesirably altering the character of their woods, to convert a very bad shoot into a very good one.

Pheasants can be made to afford 'sporting shots,' and sometimes really high ones, in any country and with any coverts; but the old methods, which are merely a survival of the days when these birds were scarce, and good shots as scarce as the birds, must be abandoned. As we have reduced pheasant shooting to an absolutely artificial pursuit, and as the demand for it in perfection seems to grow every day, there can be no reason why we should not make use of every improvement or appliance we can procure from the intelligence and experience of others.

In these days, as I have said elsewhere, shooting is not only pleasanter, but more remunerative when handsomely and cleverly done. Discipline, not discontent, must be the order of the day among the beaters, and a full knowledge of what can be done with pheasants, and how it is done in other places, should as far as possible be acquired by the head keeper.

I would again urge the desirability of giving your

keepers all the best standard books on shooting. At a very little cost you can found a small gun-room library, which, though possibly not consisting of more than twenty volumes, would be of untold value to your keepers, and make it far easier for them to understand the apparently novel and startling suggestions which you may wish to substitute for the old order of things.

CHAPTER III

HOW TO KILL THEM

To shoot pheasants well, under the usual modern conditions—namely, several guns, plenty of birds, and plenty of time to kill them in—there are essential points to be borne in mind.

I have laid stress in former volumes of this series on the fact that it is impossible to teach anyone how to shoot driven birds. This remark does not apply in the same degree to pheasant shooting. To kill them really well overhead, as our finest and most practised English shots can do, is perhaps beyond the reach of the average gunner, since it is conceded by all such performers that really high pheasants, *whether coming fast or slow*, are the most difficult of all birds to kill with certainty and neatness.

But we do not, alas ! see them really high everywhere, and in the matter of satisfying your host, your neighbours, and your own aspirations after good form, so much may be acquired by attention to the points

I shall endeavour to indicate, that it may almost be said that a man can be taught, or learn for himself, even when not naturally a fine shot, to make a very good performance at the average pheasant. There are, to begin with, several points in your favour, not always to be found in other sorts of shooting. You know the direction the birds are coming from, and the probable limit of distance for your shots; and, what is more important than either, the pace at which they come is not likely to vary much. You stand, or at least it should be so arranged that you do, on firm and even ground, are not struggling with turnips or long heather, are not out of breath or much fatigued, and have plenty of time to arrange all your preliminaries.

Granted these, the most common conditions of standing forward to kill pheasants, I will try to show, without wishing to lay down a law, what, from my own experience and observation, I should say can and ought to be learnt by any able-bodied man who is blessed with good eyesight.

Let us take the commonest instance first. You are placed to stand at the end of a wood, or of a beat in a wood, either in a broad ride or in the field outside, with another gun on each side of you, say, twenty-five yards off, very likely less, and the birds are pushed

over your heads at an easy killing distance. If these are very few in number and come singly you may kill them all. But if there are many, especially where the management is good, you are only expected to kill your fair share of what come over you individually. In nine cases out of ten you will see the same birds again, and at any rate the owner of the shooting calculates his day on the basis that a good number will escape for another day and for breeding.

This disposes at once of all necessity for haste. There can be no rivalry, or reason for scoring a large individual bag of pheasants, and though you ought to shoot freely, nay rapidly, at times, divest yourself once and for all of the idea that every bird must be secured at all hazards, as though he were a royal stag or a white rhinoceros. I am all for keenness, especially in the young—no man is much good at sport without it—but there is a particular class of keenness, closely allied to jealousy, which when displayed by one of a party for covert shooting is most objectionable.

Do not, therefore, be too anxious to secure every individual bird; there is never any excuse for this, unless when you are killing cocks only, and are specially asked to realise every possible shot. Shooting pheasants should be a more or less deliberate performance; roughly speaking, they should be *shot*

slowly. By this I mean, not that the gun should not be got off with frequency and rapidity, but that the most accomplished and artistic performer will care more for killing his pheasants properly than for merely bringing a quantity to the ground at all hazards. As I have ventured to say already, it is an artificial pursuit altogether, and though you will often find that the most apparently deliberate man secures the largest result, it has not been so much the large result, to which he is probably well accustomed, but the style in which it is attained, that the first-rate performer studies the most.

From what I have said it follows that the crime of taking your neighbour's bird is more heinous in pheasant shooting than in the wilder forms of sport, where the possible addition of a scarce bird to the bag sometimes makes it pardonable. Standing in the position I have described, take deliberately only those which are well over your own ground, selecting always the cocks as much as possible, and those which are not too near you. If a bird is coming straight to you out of or over the covert, and suddenly deflects towards your neighbour as you are on the point of shooting, you have the well-recognised right to stick to him. But if he is passing you either slanting or crossing straight, and although a poor

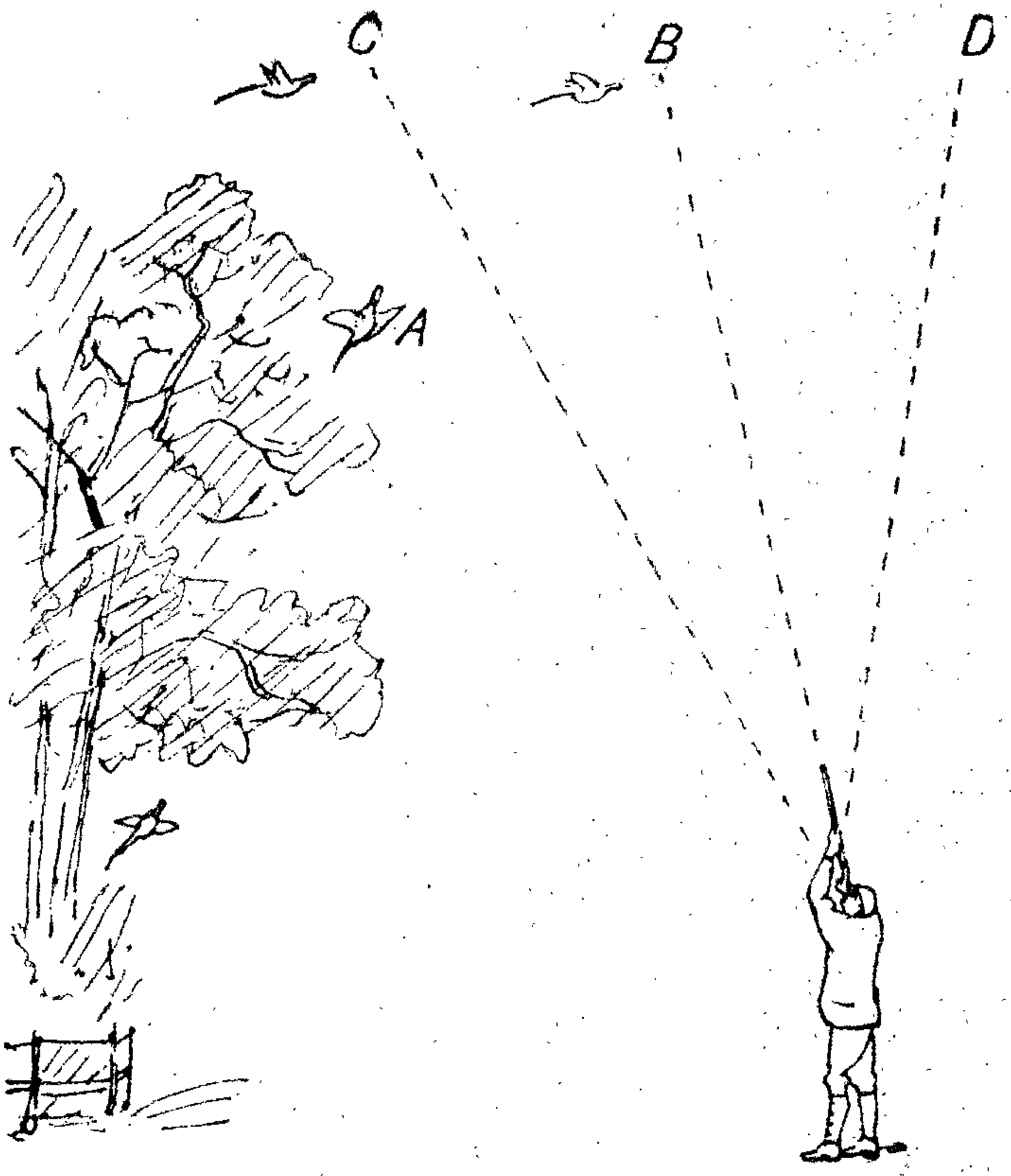
shot for you, will give a really good overhead chance to another, you should leave him alone.

Never fire at a low pheasant, under any circumstances whatsoever, when you are one of a party of guns. When the line of beaters is approaching, and may be a hundred yards off, this is particularly dangerous, as what looks an inviting cross-shot, say, ten or twelve feet from the ground, is precisely on the level which at the farther distance will catch the advancing line about their heads.

I should hope that the day is past when it is necessary to warn people against firing at low pheasants rising in front of them when there are guns —or *any persons*—ahead. Mr. Grimble, in his excellent book, has singled me out for praise on some occasion when I forbore to do this. I disclaim any right to distinction on such an account, and should be very indignant at the supposition that anyone calling himself a sportsman could do anything so greedy or so dangerous.

As I have said in the last chapter, pheasants ought never to be flushed at the end of a covert close to the guns. This is, however, presumably unavoidable in some cases, and at any rate you are sure to find yourself at times standing pretty near the flush. In this case, again, the less haste the better. As the birds

rise, possibly not twenty yards away, it is essentially bad style to shoot at them before they have risen to



the height at which they will pursue their course over the heads of the guns. It is difficult to convey one's meaning without an illustration of some sort, but in

the opposite rough diagram the conventional flush at the end of a covert is shown, and if you are placed as the shooter is there, it is at the point B, and not at the point A, that you should try to kill your bird. It is only the bad or greedy shot who fires at the point A. The bird is here only moving upward, and the whole of his body is exposed to your fire; should you not aim sufficiently above him, you will smash him to pieces, make him unfit for the table, and, while appearing over-keen and deserving no credit for the shot, you will spoil the chance, either for yourself or your neighbour, of a kill, properly executed, without damage to the bird, at the angle B. Should the bird come over the trees in front of you, from some more remote flushing point, the angle B is still the proper one, when he is coming directly over your head, at which to kill him. Properly done, it should be a single-barrel performance. In this case to kill him sooner is more difficult than at the correct angle B, and you will constantly see the bird missed with the first barrel at the point C and cleverly killed with the second at B. But this is a waste of a cartridge, and when many birds are coming, of a chance. You should have sufficient confidence, for a shot of this kind, to rely entirely on the single shot at the proper angle. You may, though you probably will not, in

case of a miss, secure him behind you, but this is always a difficult shot to kill dead.

Again, should you miss him at the proper angle B (provided always he is passing *directly* over you), you may, if you are active and not stiff in the back or shoulders, kill him by a very rapid second barrel, achieved by a more determined toss of the gun, still farther back, say at D, and without changing position or turning round. You will almost lose your balance, as the bird will have passed beyond the vertical line straight above you, but you are more likely to kill him this way than by turning round. Some men, so long as they retain their activity and suppleness of body, are able to make this a very deadly shot.

Everyone who has shot much has experience of missing an easy chance with the first barrel, and killing with great rapidity and certainty with the second from *irritation*. Quick as the operation is, there is time in the moment between the first and second barrels for the temper to be roused by one's own failure, and a consequent increase of resolution, activity, and accuracy to be imparted to the second shot. More bad shots are due to inertness, slackness, carelessness—call it what you will—than to lack of accurate eyesight or activity, and the result above mentioned, with which we are all familiar, is only

due to the stimulus of annoyance calling forth the amount of energy which ought to have been applied in the first instance. The gun must swing with rapidity and accuracy, directed by the hand and eye; if you are not sufficiently keen, or are not roused to the proper effort, in this, as in everything else, you will fail.

Now, as to the ordinary easily killable pheasant, the great thing to bear in mind is that you have nothing to do with his body or his tail. The latter appendage, so dear to the heart of the cockney journalist, should have no concern or attraction for you, nor must you allow your eye to be deceived by it. The head and neck of a pheasant is roughly about the size of a snipe, and a snipe driven past you at easy distance, if he has ceased to twist, is rather less difficult than a driven partridge. Proceed, therefore, on the principle that the bird's head is a snipe, look well at it, and shoot well in front of it. Should you not place the centre of your charge with exact accuracy on the head and neck, there will still be enough outside pellets to strike the forward part of the body and kill in respectable style. But if you treat the pheasant as a whole, from the tip of his beak to the point of his tail, your shot will be landed about the rump and thighs, and even though he falls in a cloud of

feathers, you will have made *a bad shot*, and the bird will be unfit for the table of even your bitterest enemy.

When, as occasionally happens, it is necessary to kill a pheasant very near you, this principle becomes still more vital, and you must learn to account yourself a better man should you miss him altogether by shooting *in front*, than should you kill and mangle him by being five inches too far back. It is not so difficult to 'neck' a close pheasant as one might imagine, and if you proceed on the principle I laid down in the volume on the 'Partridge,' viz. that you never have to shoot *at* a bird (unless going from or coming to you quite straight, and on the level), but at the spot in the air where the shot will intercept him; and further, if you treat his head and neck as representing the whole bird, you will find that you can slay a great proportion of the closest pheasants without spoiling the flesh of any, while putting them to the most artistic and merciful death possible.

It must not be supposed that I claim that this feat can be performed every time by anybody; there would no longer be any pleasure in shooting if there were no missing; and no zest in the pursuit of any sport or game if the element of uncertainty were entirely eliminated; but it is the right thing to try for, and,

by a good natural shot, not so difficult of attainment as many seem to think.

When, as often happens, you are in the front row of guns, with one or two picked guns forming a second row behind you, you should not, so to speak, pursue the birds which have passed you. If you do, you will appear greedy, and probably kill or wound them exactly at the moment when the gun behind you is just about to fire. As you are sure to get considerably more shooting in the front than he does in the back row, you will be treating him unfairly, and unnecessarily annoying him.

When a pheasant passes exactly halfway between you and your neighbour, I would always recommend letting it pass the line a little way before firing; let him have the chance of killing it first, if he is sufficiently greedy to try and do so. It is almost sure to be an easy chance, which will gain you no *kudos*; and, as I have said above, there is no excuse for scoring one against the other in pheasant shooting.

The happiest position at a big rise of pheasants is to be placed in the back row, with two moderate and not greedy guns in front of you. Should those in front shoot too well, it is not always such good fun, though very pretty to look on at.

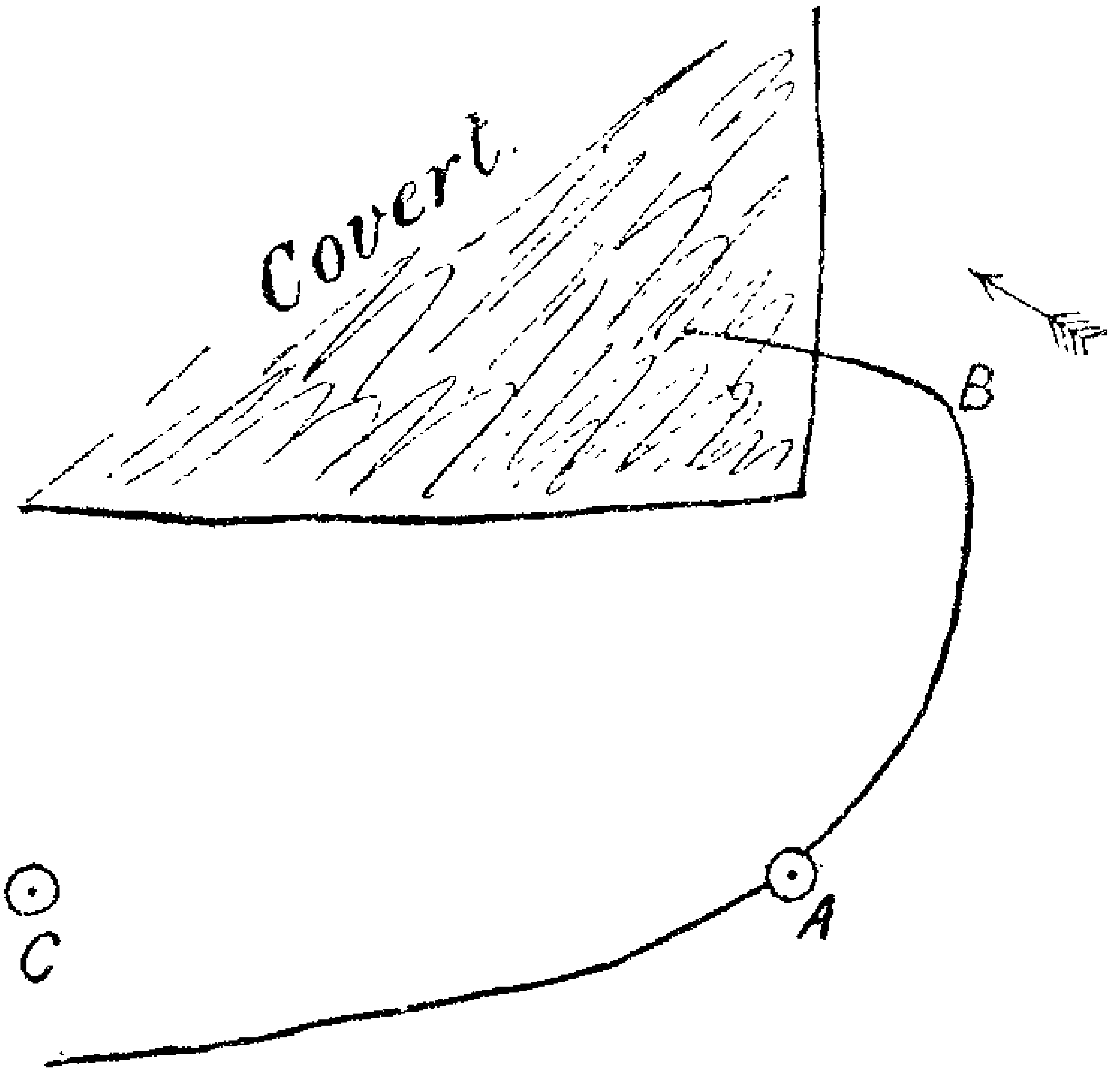
I remember once standing in this position behind

the late General (Jim) Macdonald and Lord Huntingfield. The birds were flushed in small quantities at a time, and in the most artistic manner. We killed 350 at the stand, and I killed 13! I had nothing but single shots, all high, and I think only missed two or three; but the performance in front of me was exceptional and well worth looking at, and I never enjoyed a rise of pheasants more.

So far as I have observed, the most difficult overhead pheasant to kill is that which is coming over you in a curve, or, as it is often called, 'with a curl on.' The inward curve is, I think, the hardest to deal with, especially if you are sufficiently near to the place where the bird was flushed for him to be still rising. You will often see this kind of shot offered when there is a strong side wind. The bird which is intended to fly straight towards and over you will rise, as every bird must, with his breast to the wind; as he faces it struggling to keep his head towards it, but knowing he must rise to clear the trees, he loses more and more control over his flight; the wind gets underneath him when he has risen a certain distance from the ground; half a turn to one side, and it catches him fairly broadside on. In a second, like a vessel caught in a sudden squall, he is rudderless and unmanageable, and has to drift with the wind; round

he swings, and comes partly over and partly across you at a tremendous pace, still rising a little and at a curve resembling that of a skater on the outside edge.

How can one lay down a rule for killing such a bird? It is true you can let him go right past and,



A. Position of shooter.
B. Point where the bird becomes paralysed by the heavy wind blowing in the direction of the arrow; the surest point at which to kill him.
C. The next gun in position.

half turning round, follow him up with your shot, and possibly kill him, but at the pace he is going he will be a long way off by the time your shot reaches him, and most probably be directly over your neighbour's head, and should you kill him, he will fall just about on the head or at the feet of the gun next be-

yond your neighbour; so that this does not somehow seem to be the right way to take him. But there is another mistake you may certainly avoid, and that is shooting too soon at him. While he is still rising rapidly and the inward curve has begun, unless you are a very first-rate shot, you are as sure to miss him as possible, and it is beyond me to tell you how to kill him, except that it must be done by instinct; but if you take him just at the moment when he becomes helpless and has to turn and go with the wind, you may have the satisfaction of crumpling him up. Here, again, is an exceptional instance, absolutely proving the rule, where you will shoot straight, or almost straight, *at* the bird; but unless you are rather over than under him even in this instance the wind will just lift him out of your shot, you wound him, and back he goes down the covert a dying bird, but carried on the breeze for perhaps two hundred yards before he reaches the ground.

If you are not near enough to the flush to do this you will get the most difficult shot which a pheasant ever presents. He will be passing over and towards you on the aforesaid inward curve from a point outside you on your right front to another outside you on your left rear, and at a terrific pace. The only hint I can give you here is to rely on your left arm

entirely to lift your gun inwards and a long way in front of the bird before he has got directly over your head; if you can carry this out and shoot a little sooner than usual, you may manage him, but if *when he is on this curve* and at this pace you once let him get right over you, it is goodbye to him; you are sure to shoot outside the curve of his flight, and most probably behind him as well, while the velocity of his flight will not admit of your turning round rapidly or steadily enough, after such a definite effort, to kill him after he has passed.

The bird whose curve is outward from you is on the other hand, a less difficult and quite killable shot. Should he be, as is probable, still rising, you have only to remember—always the same caution—not to be under him, and as he must present a purely broadside mark at some point of the curve, take him as nearly as possible at that point, and you will compass him without difficulty.

Anyone familiar with varieties of shooting must have heard the point discussed as to why the pheasant which has long passed his 'zenith,' and is skimming or sailing broadside on to you, and getting pretty near the ground, is so often missed. Certainly it happens so, and to the best of marksmen, at any rate at distances beyond thirty yards. But I think the

failure is more due to the attitude of the bird towards you, than to want of skill in the shooter, though there is undoubtedly something which bothers you about the look of him. When you come to analyse it, however, it is wonderful how his peculiar position towards you protects him, and how little of him there is to shoot at. His head and neck are there in profile, it is true, but then comes the near wing incurved, motionless, each feather extended laterally towards you, and protecting with its convex surface his whole body. The other wing is hidden away from you on the other side, protected again by the body; the legs are tucked up, and the tail goes for nothing. It follows then, as I have no doubt in this instance the feathers of the wing will deflect the pellets, that unless you break the wing bone, which is also pointed towards you, and therefore presents really an infinitesimal mark, you have only the head and neck to shoot at. These, at thirty-five or forty yards, will escape being vitally struck in a large proportion of instances. When you add to all this that there is something puzzling about the pace and downward slope of the bird's motion, I think you will have accounted for the frequency of misses at this particular moment of the pheasant's flight. You will observe the same skimming pheasant killed regularly and easily when coming

towards the gun, no longer protected by the wing, as I have described, or, in fact, at any angle but when broadside on to the shooter.

The use of the left arm, as I have said in the volumes on Grouse and Partridge, is an essential study for driven birds; it is, if possible, still more vital in pheasant shooting. With this member the gun has to be entirely lifted and directed, and anything like stiffness in the fore-arm or shoulder will tell at once with fatal effect on your performance at overhead pheasants.[1] Practise yourself, whenever you can, at raising and depressing the gun in every direction and at every angle, with a very tight grip of the barrels in the left hand, and an equally slight or loose hold of it in the right; using the left not only as the motive power, but also to keep the gun firm against the shoulder. Anything like pulling or pushing with the right arm is sure to result in bad shooting.

The toss necessary to kill a pheasant coming straight overhead must of course be done entirely by

[1] For any rheumatism, or stiffness of the shoulder or arm, the simplest and most effective remedy I have come across is pure glacial acetic acid, mixed in the proportion of (about) one part of acid to three of water. Merely wet the skin with this wherever you feel the rheumatism, at night, and in the morning before going out, and it will disperse it wonderfully. It is not necessary to rub it in, merely let it dry on the skin.

the left arm; but its use is equally important in order to kill one passing over the line high and wide to your right or left. This is a difficult and easily missed chance; you have to hold a long way in front, sometimes what looks like twelve or fifteen feet, but even when you have judged the distance with accuracy everything depends upon the left arm being raised and held with sufficient firmness to insure the gun being kept level and aimed over the line of the bird. If you do not believe this, try some day, when you find yourself missing such shots, the effect of giving the gun an extra toss, and deliberately shooting, as it appears to you, over the bird altogether. You will, if your allowance in front of him be correct, probably kill him stone dead.

The calculation of how far to hold in front of a high or wide pheasant must, as I have said before, be largely instinctive,[1] but as the pace of these birds, from the shortness of their flight, varies less than that of partridges or grouse, you may acquire very tolerable proficiency by practice. In a gale of wind, however, a cock pheasant when well under way flies probably as fast as any game-bird; and many people believe, and profess to have proved, that he flies faster than a partridge. I have tried, but without success, to

[1] See *The Partridge*, vol. i. of The Fur and Feather Series.

get trustworthy statistics to prove this ; but though I am not inclined to disbelieve it, I cannot say that any absolutely proved case has been found to support it. The partridge certainly looks to fly the faster of the two, but the amount of pheasants missed or struck too far back shows clearly enough that the latter at any rate flies much faster than he appears to do. We know that the capercailzie is usually missed by novices from the same deceptive quality, due to his size ; and I am told by those who have shot the great bustard in Spain, that the same thing usually happens to beginners there.

The pheasant is the largest bird, excepting the black-cock, that we habitually shoot ; and though the latter, from the stately beat of his wings, is especially apt to deceive us as to pace, yet the pheasant's tail amply makes up for his quicker wing action, and I think betrays us into shooting behind him oftener than any other bird.

Nothing is more instructive than to look on during a big stand for pheasants, when you do not know the order in which the other guns are placed, and to try and pick out each individual gun from your knowledge of his form, as you see the birds pass over the line. It is wonderful what an extraordinary difference those little five inches make ; you

can detect where the really good shot is standing at once, you seem almost to see the charge strike the bird in the neck and forward part of the breast; his head falls back, his wings shut together behind his back, and without a kick or struggle he falls straight and heavily on to his breast-bone on the earth. Occasionally when the shot is if anything too forward, you see him struck with one or two pellets only, under the chin, or where his chin would be if he possessed one, and as they pass through his brain he spins round and comes down like an expiring catherine-wheel. How different the result as the pheasant passes over the inferior performer! Bird after bird flinching and wincing, but passing on: or heavily struck in the hinder parts he comes slowly down, at a more obtuse angle, his head and neck intact but in the agonies of death still stretched forth, his wings still half extended, his legs kicked out and his tail spread and broken. Eventually he reaches the earth, where, unless he can still run, he lies suffering till his neck is wrung by a merciful keeper, and his struggles are ended.

Why cannot we always get that little bit more forward which makes so much difference in the skill of the man, and in mercy to the bird? Frequently it is from the force of bad habit—from not considering the moving silhouette of the bird against the sky in

the manner indicated above—not as a thing to be aimed *at*, but *intercepted*; frequently, from shooting too soon or too late instead of at the killing angle; frequently, nay, always with the man whose habitual form is good, from some disorder of the digestion, the liver, or the nerves. To shoot well—it cannot be too often repeated—a man should be as fit as though he had to fight for his life. In consideration for his host, in mercy to the birds, and in hope of satisfaction to himself, let him bear in mind to eat lightly, sleep well, and exceed in nothing. To shoot badly, besides being an unsightly and disappointing performance, is a very cruel thing to the birds, and in the case of pheasants, since you are under no obligation to score heavily, and can always pick your shots, is really unnecessary to anyone in good health, and who does not suffer from defective vision.

As a proof of this, there are numbers of men who have taken to the gun late in life, and who, though they make a poor hand at driven partridges or grouse, at a wild snipe or a still wilder wood-pigeon, will yet perform very well at ordinary pheasants. They have grasped the system, they take things coolly, are not jealous or over-keen, they select carefully the shots they feel they can kill, ignoring those they cannot, and it is only a practised eye that would detect—

when pheasants are coming over at easy killable distance—that they are not really skilled and experienced sportsmen.

I would venture to implore those who, from defective vision or lack of some other qualities, find that they cannot succeed even so far as I have just described, not to attempt the heavy pheasant shooting of the present day. They may take their pleasure with grouse and partridges, at wild walking-up or driving; they will kill only a few, but they will wound still fewer, while they get healthy exercise and enjoyment. But they will commit the cruelty of wounding a great many pheasants where these come thick and easy, and never be safe or satisfactory participators in a pursuit which, unless well done, had better not be done at all.

To return to the various difficulties and how to surmount them. If you are standing among trees, where it is hardly possible to get an absolutely clear shot, you will never do any good by hanging on and waiting for the bird to cross an open space. I do not suggest that you should deliberately fire through a thick tree top, yet you must more or less ignore the branches, and shoot exactly as though the bird were in the open. When you are in really good form it is curious how seldom you will find the twigs and

boughs stop the charge sufficiently to prevent your killing your bird stone dead. On the other hand, if he have licence to move a little back or forward, an old hand will vastly improve his position by shifting so as not to stand where a heavy tree top is exactly at the spot which he sees will prove the killing angle.

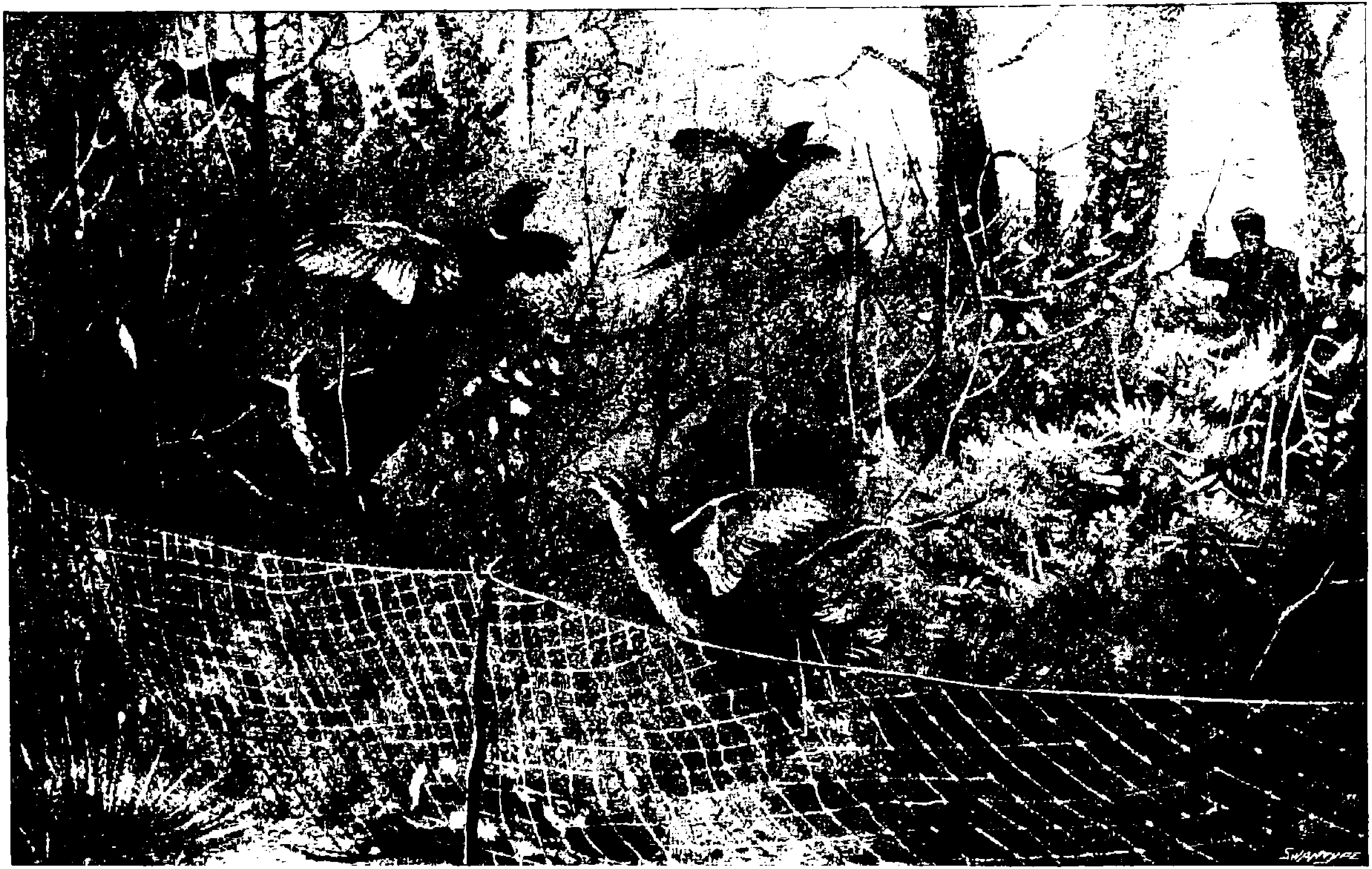
Lastly, there is but a word or two to be said about killing pheasants rising before you. This you may be called upon to do when after cocks only, in which case every possible chance should be taken, too many being generally left on the ground, only to fight and stray, and thus reduce the producing power of your wild stock. Or you may be out for what I may call the old-fashioned October day, on an outlying beat, where it is desirable to secure as many as possible of the roving wild-bred birds, or on the fringe of the moor in Scotland, where a pheasant is a prize, and a welcome variety to the larder.

Pheasants, from the great strength of their legs, in dry weather at least, get very quickly on to the wing, and, as we know, fly very fast, especially the cocks. Do not therefore give them too much time when flushed before you, or you will fail to bring them down dead ; and you may never see a winged cock again, if he falls in thick covert where there is no one ahead to stop him, unless you have a very

good dog and can afford to let him go at once. But as this may disturb the ground for a quarter of a mile ahead, avoid the contingency if you possibly can. Here, again, to aim accurately and high enough is the secret. Shoot just over his back, before he has got too far if he be going straight away; once he has got beyond the comfortable distance he is as difficult a creature to kill quite dead as a hare under the same conditions, and that is saying a great deal. Whether flying sideways or straight from you he will be rising very fast, and it requires just a second's thought to be sure not to miss him by shooting underneath.

To sum up, I have endeavoured to make it clear that to the average man of ordinary athletic habits and good eyesight, it should not be a matter of great difficulty to perform creditably at pheasant shooting. We have boldly faced the question of the artificiality of the sport as developed to-day; but excepting in wild countries, where the shy or ferocious denizens of the region have to be pursued by the unaided astuteness of the single-handed hunter, there is invariably a large element of this quality in all sports, and it is of no use to cavil thereat.

It is absurd any longer to regard the pheasant as a *rara avis*, to secure which the exceptional qualities of an eager and vigorous hunter are required; he



cannot even be compared to the partridge, the grouse, or the black-cock in this respect, certainly not to the wild duck, the wood-pigeon, or the Brent goose ; but he is a perfectly untameable, strong-running and strong-flying bird which, from his attachment to his accustomed haunts and feeding ground, can and does provide a form of artificial sport which will always be popular with those who live in the country and can afford to take part in it.

To do this with a sufficient amount of skill, courtesy, and self-control, is, I maintain, within the reach of most people. Those who do not naturally possess or cannot acquire these necessary qualities, I adjure not to cultivate pheasant shooting, for while it gives them but little pleasure it will bring them more enemies than friends.

CHAPTER IV

WILD-BRED AND HAND-REARED

THE foregoing two chapters have been written exclusively with reference to the shooting of woods by organised parties, and without regard to the origin, artificial or otherwise, of the birds to be dealt with.

But while we speak of pheasant shooting, in its most prevalent and best known form, we must not neglect mention of the wild-bred bird; little as he may count in the calculations of the large breeder or habitual sharer in the making of heavy bags of hand-reared birds. Still less must we ignore the existence of the occasional or unexpected pheasant which, hatched and reared in the edges of detached and remote coverts, or possibly on the fringe of a prolific grouse moor, affords to so many a welcome surprise, a hot pursuit, a difficult shot, and an infrequent delicacy.

The significance of the term 'the First,' applied, as it is, exclusively to the month of September and to the

rival partridge, must be noted as showing that though on the eve of the first of October 'sportsmen are anxiously looking forward to a pop at the long-tails' may be the favourite conventional phrase of the urban journalist, it by no means represents the state of mind of, or the use of terms affected by, those who reside in the country where the 'long-tail' abounds.

Much as you may value, and keen as you may be to secure, your wild-bred birds, whether for pleasure or profit, you are not likely to obtain much by pursuing them on the first of October. If you went out on this date to secure cocks only in hedgerows, osier beds, or spinneys, you would no doubt bag a certain number which, at a later date, would—besides being more wary—find it easier to elude you among the scantier crops, thinner covert, and clearer ditches of winter. But those who go out to kill off cocks exclusively at this period of the season are rare, and the more frequent condition of the pursuit is that while, by hook or by crook, the old cock escapes, the immature brood is destroyed in detail by the greedy and inexperienced gunner. Should one haply escape, it is a young and forward cock bird, which, following in the footsteps of its father, runs some distance ahead and gets up out of shot.

The stock on outlying or rough and unmanageable

ground must be kept up, and may be largely increased by forbidding the destruction of any young bird, cock or hen, in the early days of the season, while the covert is thick and the days are still long and balmy.[1] Unless the brood be very backward, I would generally kill the old hen, as, later on, she will be difficult to distinguish from the younger ones, upon which you must rely for future progeny. The wild hen pheasant is a very bad mother, and, to say the truth, when she has hatched and reared in her imperfect and dilatory fashion the four or five chicks which she has managed to save out of fourteen or fifteen good eggs, the sooner she is hung up in the larder the better. If she be the parent of a very late brood, no bigger than partridges during the first week in October, it is not of much consequence whether she is killed or not ; the young birds are not likely to survive the winter, whether she be dead or alive.

But, to my thinking, an old cock pheasant should be secured wherever and whenever you can get him—during open shooting in the fields, or beating broken

[1] The exception to this would be, where the young birds are hatched and have grown up on the very border of your ground, possibly in the border fence itself, and where you have a greedy hard-killing neighbour. For views on the question of border birds see *The Partridge.*

ground or isolated copses and coverts.[1] There is no fear whatever, on account of the wary instincts and marvellous running powers of the bird, of your killing all that are on the ground. Even if you did, and at the end of the season you have left hens exclusively, cocks will travel to them from great distances; while, if you leave too many cocks, they will, with their polygamous instincts and roving disposition, leave your ground in search of some place where they may be more in demand among the ladies; and if they stay with you, the older and stronger birds will fight off the younger, which would be the most prolific stock-getters.

It is very easy to say kill the cocks on wild and rough ground, but not so easy to do it. I can only assure you that if you will leave out all considerations of quantity or weight of bag, you can enjoy many most delightful days of true sport after the thickest of the leaf is off, pitting your own intelligence and that of your dogs against the wild nature and evasive tricks of the cock pheasant.

To do this you must, of necessity, be keen and active; your companion or assistants must be as

[1] This, of course, would not apply to a turnip field close to your home woods, where while beating for partridges you might kill enough to seriously damage your covert shooting.

ready to run as to walk; you must have knowledge or instinct to guide you to likely ground; and last, but not least, you must possess a good dog or couple of dogs, and know how to handle them. If you are familiar with your ground, and it is broken up by irregularly shaped copses and plantations, you may do much, if you can think of a narrow neck where two coverts meet, or where a point of wood or undergrowth juts out into the open, by sending on one or two of your limited band to act as stops—to station there, and to keep the old cocks from running in or out. But you must do this ere ever you have set foot or fired a shot in the covert or thicket you are going to beat; and the man or boy you send forward must be sound of wind and limb, able to run quickly, one who will not shirk making a good wide circuit to get to his post, and who, when there, will 'cannily' check the forward running of the birds. And when you get close to the end, and come right upon the two or three old cock pheasants whom it has cost you much trouble and hard walking to out-manœuvre, he must have the sense to become suddenly non-existent, to lie down or place the thick trunk of a tree between your barrels and himself, or he may baulk you after all your toil and trouble by being in the direct line of your solitary shot.

Whenever you come across a youth with these qualities, combined, as they probably will be, with a power of marking and an undying love for dogs, keep him in your service, and promote him to an under keeper's place as soon as possible—you have got hold of the right sort.

In wild shooting there is no such useless and unproductive personage as the man who, whether by bad handling of his dog, or by the noise and blundering which accompany his own progress, is always disturbing the ground for miles in front of him. In no case is this more evident than when you are trying to get up to and come to terms with wild cock pheasants ; and you may be certain that unless those with you have the same instinct as yourself and your good dog, that is, of covering the ground rapidly and silently, while never passing or neglecting a thick or likely piece of covert, you have no chance against these active and wily birds. Such men will blunder on a woodcock or two ; roar at an occasional rabbit, which you will not get ; and flush a certain number of terrified hen pheasants from under their noisy feet ; but the brilliant old cock, the object of your pursuit, with his stout legs, keen eye, and strong wings, you will never see unless, haply, he takes it into his head to wing his way, apparently unconcerned, across the heath, some three

hundred yards away in front of you, to some piece of covert which he knows you have neither the forces nor the energy to beat.

Now as to your dog: the difficulty in this kind of sport usually lies here. The perfect dog for the work is a setter (a brace, if you like), but he must not be one of the wide-ranging sort, such as you would employ on a moor where grouse are scarce. He must set about his work more like a spaniel, and must have a good nose and be a true hunter, that he may road the running bird in front of you. He may have to do this where the country is all open, though the covert may be thick—that is, in such districts as the New Forest, or the broken ground below the moors so common in Scotland—for a quarter of a mile or more; and, though he will occasionally digress should he strike a fresh scent, he must be of the persevering kind which will come back or can be easily got back to the line. Many checks you will experience, but by patience and trouble, and making casts to recover the line, you will be able at last to run down your cock pheasant until the dog can stand to him steadily in some thick place where he has decided to squat, and you can walk up and kill him easily.

If the pursuit take place exclusively in very thick covert, underbrush, gorse, and the like, a spaniel will

suit better than a setter, as the size of the latter is much against him in such ground ; but in either case you will want a steady, trustworthy dog which should, if possible, retrieve as well.[1] The difficulty about the spaniel is that he is more than likely to dash in upon the squatting cock pheasant before you have time to come up and take the shot, whereas the setter on finding himself close to his game would stand. But if you can keep with the spaniel he is the best in thick wood, while the setter will do more for you on broken ground, where a good deal of ranging has to be got through before you come to a find.

Although I am, generally speaking, averse to killing pheasants at all in early October, yet there are always places, such as small isolated spinneys or copses, which do not furnish a whole day's shooting, and which it would not, consequently, be worth making a day for on their account alone. These may be taken early in the season, together with a few partridge drives or walks.

But of all errors there is none greater than to spoil a good day's partridge driving by going out of your way, at your keeper's request, in order to 'make

[1] The spaniel is very apt to be hard-mouthed. I would therefore recommend you to let him carry a cock pheasant as short a distance as possible, especially if it be a winged bird.

sure' of an odd brood or two of half-grown pheasants in a small covert, thick with leaf. I have seen this mistake made often. While you are engaged upon this sort of pretence of covert shooting you lose your partridges, which run together again, or make back on to their own ground, and the result, so far as concerns the pheasants, is that you do what I have described above: you kill a few immature pullets, which afford the most pottering, poking shots, and the old cocks or full-grown young ones escape you altogether. You had far better, in truth, leave such places alone altogether, and treat the birds in them as so much extra stock for next year, trusting to luck to come upon the old gentlemen in their wanderings for acorns as you go over your partridge ground a second time. If, however, you live in a land much beset by poachers, and the covert be a lonely one, far from a keeper's house, you must make a day there before the leaf is fairly off.

Nothing strikes one more in Norfolk, especially in the heath district, than the prevalence of pheasants everywhere. Every big fern brake, or little copse or spinney, on or adjoining the heaths, holds its little quota of these birds, and it adds greatly to the charm of a partridge drive when it is varied by a few rocketing pheasants out of the belt you are standing by, or

when they rise high off the heath and come over with the partridges, and quite as fast.

I well remember the first drive I ever had at Elvedon, with the late Maharajah Dhuleep Singh; thirty-six partridges and forty-five pheasants fell to my own gun, besides a few hares, in about a quarter of an hour from taking our places. The late October days in Norfolk and Suffolk, especially where there is heath, are among the most fascinating to be got in England. The mixed days to be had at the same season in the lowlands of Scotland, where grouse and blackgame, 'capers' or woodcock, alternate with the rocketing pheasant, are a luxury of varied shooting. But the pheasants are all got at these places in practically the same manner, that is, by inclosing and driving a good stretch of country, moorland, or heath and covert together, with a strong line of beaters, and forcing the pheasants along with driven grouse, partridges or blackgame, to the guns in position. This is almost the only class of October shooting at pheasants, the leaf being still thick in the coverts, which can be described as worth having. Those who have not such favourable ground, where each wood is isolated and must be taken in the orthodox manner, will do better to leave them till a little later on.

Of the hand-reared bird I may offer some

general observations in supplement of what has been so exhaustively written elsewhere. The nesting, egg sampling, setting, hatching, rearing, food, treatment and disease, together with all details of pheasantries, pens, coops, runs, &c., would make, and have made, volumes longer than the prescribed limits of this one. There are a host of books in which the experiences of this kind of poultry yard—for it is nothing else—have been dealt with up to date; but I propose to add a very few hints which are the outcome of my own observation, and in which I will endeavour to indicate the general and important principles on which pheasant rearing should be carried on, rather than the details, since the latter must vary largely according to the locality, the expenditure of the owner, and the object he has in view.

The first thing to realise is that the production of hand-reared pheasants is entirely a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence. In order not to waste your money, supposing that you can afford to choose your place, you must do so in a country where the conditions are proportionate to the amount of pheasants you wish to rear. You will find infinite variety of locality and scenery. For instance, if your intention and ambition be to kill 8,000 to 10,000 pheasants in the season, that is, if you want to do somewhere about

a 'best on record,' and have the heaviest shooting in England, you can do it in Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, or possibly Essex (on the light land). You may do it in Lancashire, if you can get ground like Croxteth or Knowsley,[1] and possibly in Yorkshire; but it will cost you more in the last-named two counties.

Again, it would undoubtedly be possible to reach a maximum result in Hampshire or Dorsetshire, while the records of Hawkstone[2] show what can be done in Shropshire, and most probably in Staffordshire and Cheshire also. In certain parts of Nottinghamshire and Northamptonshire there is good ground, and again in Worcestershire and Warwickshire, though perhaps not good enough for a maximum, and I know that in parts of Devon, Herts, Sussex, and even Surrey large quantities have been successfully reared and kept.

In many parts of Scotland, especially on the east coast, it would be difficult to fix a limit to the number of pheasants that might be turned out. In East

[1] The Earl of Sefton's and the Earl of Derby's respectively.

[2] Lord Hill's estate, near Shrewsbury, where over 2,000 pheasants have several times been killed in one day. Since the above was written, Lord Hill has died, to the regret of all who knew him. As Rowland Hill he was one of the best shots of the day, both at game and pigeons, and the most courteous and genial of men in either field.

Lothian those who know the most favoured ground the best consider it superior even to Norfolk and Suffolk. But the matter has to be differently managed there, and special qualities of tact and consideration are necessary for the interests of what is probably the best farmed region of the British Islands. Those who are acquainted with the Scotch farmer will know at once what I mean, and appreciate the difference between raising game on land in his occupation and on the heath lands of Norfolk.

You could produce your result much more cheaply in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridgeshire than in any of the other counties named, although in some parts of these, where crops are scarce, much artificial feeding is necessary; and, next to these, I should say in Hants or Dorset. Against this you must consider that you will have to pay a higher shooting rent than in the latter counties.

But, again, if you are the owner, and wish to have very heavy shooting, either for your own amusement, or in order to raise the reputation of your place as a game estate, it may and ought in these days—granted you are on favourable soil—to prove a very good investment to go in for profitable sport on a large scale with really careful management.

If, on the other hand, your estate is in less favoured

regions—say, upon cold clay, or where the coverts are almost entirely surrounded by grass land, in a rigorous climate or on high ground—you can never make your pheasant shooting even approach the point of cheapness or profit, but must, since the conditions will be still more artificial, always submit to a very heavy outlay.

The description given by the old huntsman, chaffing the gamekeeper of a shot at a pheasant—'Up gets a sovereign, off goes a penny, and down comes half a crown'—although it probably exaggerates the cost of production of the bird, will go very near representing the figures of your balance sheet in a sterile game country.

Generally speaking, it will pay much better to rear on a heavy scale than on a light one. Many keepers and owners have discovered this, and it accounts in a great measure for the enormous increase in pheasants throughout England and Scotland. The same staff of men employed as keepers, watchers, and beaters where the results are poor, and the shooting is roughly described as 'bad,' would, as a rule, suffice to look after three times the amount of game; and thus the wages item, together with the larger amount of value in game realised, more than counterbalances increase of the bill for food and appliances.

The fact that the whole thing becomes more popular, because it circulates more money, in the neighbourhood, may also be held to weigh somewhat in this connection. I have always noticed that where game is very extensively reared, and the whole thing done on a liberal and plenteous scale, it is more popular with the humbler surroundings. Poaching is less, for the game is looked after in a thorough and business-like manner, while the minor offences by those who are not professional poachers are more frequently and readily condoned. Everyone benefits somehow by the result in the neighbourhood of a great game estate,[1] and it is consequently to everyone's interest to be friendly with the keepers, and assist rather than thwart them in their duty.

This brings me to the second important point: the character and capacity of your keepers. I have already suggested in a former chapter that the gamekeeper of the future will have to be a man of a superior class to the majority of those this generation has been used to. But this may not insure his honesty, and there is no department of the management of an estate in which the owner may be more easily robbed than

[1] I am not here, of course, advocating the over-preservation of ground-game. Rabbits should never be kept in large quantities, excepting on ground that is warrened, or in the owner's own hands.

in the game. Honest keepers always have game, but again they sometimes waste money lavishly.

Your head man must keep a strict and honourable watch upon the corn account, and all the minor charges for sitting hens and food of all sorts, which his underlings may manipulate to their own advantage. Where there is fraudulent management a vast amount of corn is supposed to be bought by the owner which never reaches the pheasants, and many other things are purchased in larger quantities and at higher prices than they should be.

The temptation to sell eggs, and game, dead or alive, is also very great, and with eggs especially is more often yielded to than is supposed. There is a very free market in pheasants' eggs, and it would be impossible to prevent the sale of them, nor could you check it by a consensus of righteous opinion, as is undoubtedly done to a certain extent with partridge's eggs. But the simplest check of all is to judge your man by the results on his beat. If to your certain knowledge he had so many hens on the ground on February 1, has had so much money, or its equivalent in food and appliances, as should produce, at a fair estimate considering the season, so many pheasants, and if when you go to shoot his wood these pheasants are not there, dismiss him. Do not drive him to

worse courses by taking away his character, but give him the lesson which may be the turning point in his life, and suit yourself with another man who can and does produce adequate results.

A large number of people, in this matter of rearing game, as in so many other things, ruin their dependants by their own carelessness, ignorance, or dislike to taking any sort of trouble. They shoot their woods lightly, spare the hens the second time over, and leave an enormous stock of the latter at the end of the season ; yet they are quite content when the next year comes round to find only about half as many pheasants to deal with as this number of hens ought to have produced.

For instance, one hundred hens are left in and about a certain wood. Of these let us suppose ten to die or turn out barren for some reason or other. The remaining ninety, in a fair game country, should lay fifteen eggs apiece *as an average.* This gives 1,350 eggs, of which, with good management, 1,000 should, excepting in a very unfavourable year, be produced for shooting purposes. Add to these the original ninety and what wild cocks were left, say thirty—and you find that when you go to shoot your wood there should be 1,120 pheasants, more or less, to deal with. If all goes well you ought to kill 650 or 700 of these

the first time over; yet the majority of owners who have left one hundred hens would think they had done well if they killed 300 or 400 pheasants the following year. I have knocked off a very liberal discount for accident and the uncertainties of rearing. For a more liberal estimate per hen you may refer to Mr. Tegetmeier's work, p. 57, wherein he quotes an authority who gathered 1,500 eggs from forty hens one year, and 1,600 from forty-one hens the following year.

The owner of a large game preserve is usually but little on the spot between April and July, when the serious business of laying, hatching, and rearing is taking place, and it is absolutely essential that, having secured a head keeper whom he can trust, he should rely upon him to look after his underlings, and judge the whole matter fairly by results. One of the best known game preservers in the country always engages his keepers on the understanding that if a certain number of pheasants are not forthcoming on his beat they have to leave without further argument. In this instance the owner, who has had large experience, is a very competent judge of what each beat should produce, and his keepers know there is no trifling with him or the system.

All the best authorities have a great belief in

frequent change of blood ; you should, therefore, if you have a sufficient stock left not to require to buy eggs, exchange some with any of your friends living some distance off. Also mix the eggs of the hens in your pheasantry with those gathered from wild nests, never losing sight of the fact that change and mixture of blood is the greatest factor of all in keeping from year to year a healthy and numerous flock of birds.

The gathering of eggs from wild nests demands considerable skill, care, and tact. It is a great mistake on most estates to gather up every egg. When laid in favourable and secure places, a certain proportion only should be lifted; and, again, let not the suicidal and greedy policy of skimming everything from near the boundary be followed, unless it be close to a town or village, the resort of poachers and tramps, or alongside of a quantity of small freeholds. This department of hand-rearing is most fully and ably dealt with in the Badminton Library ('Field and Covert' volume). But it should be added that some of the best Norfolk keepers, on estates *where expense is not spared*, are of opinion that no eggs should be left in wild nests ; that they can produce a better proportion to the gun from the eggs when taken up and dealt with in the pheasantry, and that wild-bred birds are not worth consideration where you can afford to rear on a large

scale. Against this Lord Walsingham tells me that he has killed from 2,000 to 2,500 *wild-bred* birds in a season on the Merton estate.[1] This is one of the points which will vary on different estates, according to the nature of the nesting ground, the prevalence of egg stealers, and the views of the head keeper or manager.

But in a cold and unfavourable country, expense or not, you will do very little with wild birds, and had better secure every egg you can.

If you have a choice of coverts, belts, and woods, you must, by various experiments, ascertain which of them will really hold pheasants. There are some woods which 'lie warm,' where it is no difficulty to keep the birds you stock them with, and which yield besides a varying but useful proportion of wild-bred birds. These are not always large woods, nor always those you would expect; but never be misguided by the ignorance of a keeper or by tradition into filling with pheasants, year after year, a wood in which they will not naturally stay.

How often do you hear that the birds will always draw down to such and such a covert, or stray over to

[1] At Beaulieu in Hampshire, belonging to Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, one of the finest sporting places in England, the same number of wild-bred birds has been killed in the season.

such another! If so, take those coverts which they will draw or stray to rather than the one they stray from to put your stock into. Improve or add to the coverts, instead of obstinately trying year by year to prevent the birds following their own superior instinct as to what suits them. Exceptions must occur, of course, as where the wood that attracts them is situated on your boundary, or is of such a nature that you cannot get a good day's shooting out of it; but in these cases you must deal with the difficulties in other ways. If in a certain covert you always find more birds than you expect, make it at once into one of your principal days; and if, on the other hand, your home wood or any other which has for years been traditionally one of the 'big days,' always results in disappointment, give it up entirely as a stronghold of pheasants, and shoot others of less apparent importance. The habits of the birds will prove a very safe guide.

For your pheasantries or pens more or less open ground—that is, with plenty of light—must be selected. It is also of paramount importance that they should be on well-drained soil, and on a slope facing south or south-west. Without these essential conditions it is absolutely impossible to succeed; while they apply equally to the ground on which the young birds are

put out with the coops. This should be shifted every year.

It follows that you must not hamper your keeper by not allowing him suitable places for these objects. Even if you have to pay for it, it is wise to let him, granted he be an experienced man, have such ground for his pheasantries and young birds as he wishes. This must—for the young birds, at least—be fresh every year, as just remarked, and must not be cold or damp. Nothing so injuriously affects the health of all gallinaceous birds as to have their feet constantly on wet and cold ground.

Personally, I am against the formation of pheasantries of such a permanent structure that birds are penned in them on the same ground for several consecutive years; but some great authorities, including Jackson of Sandringham, believe that the best results may equally be obtained in this way.

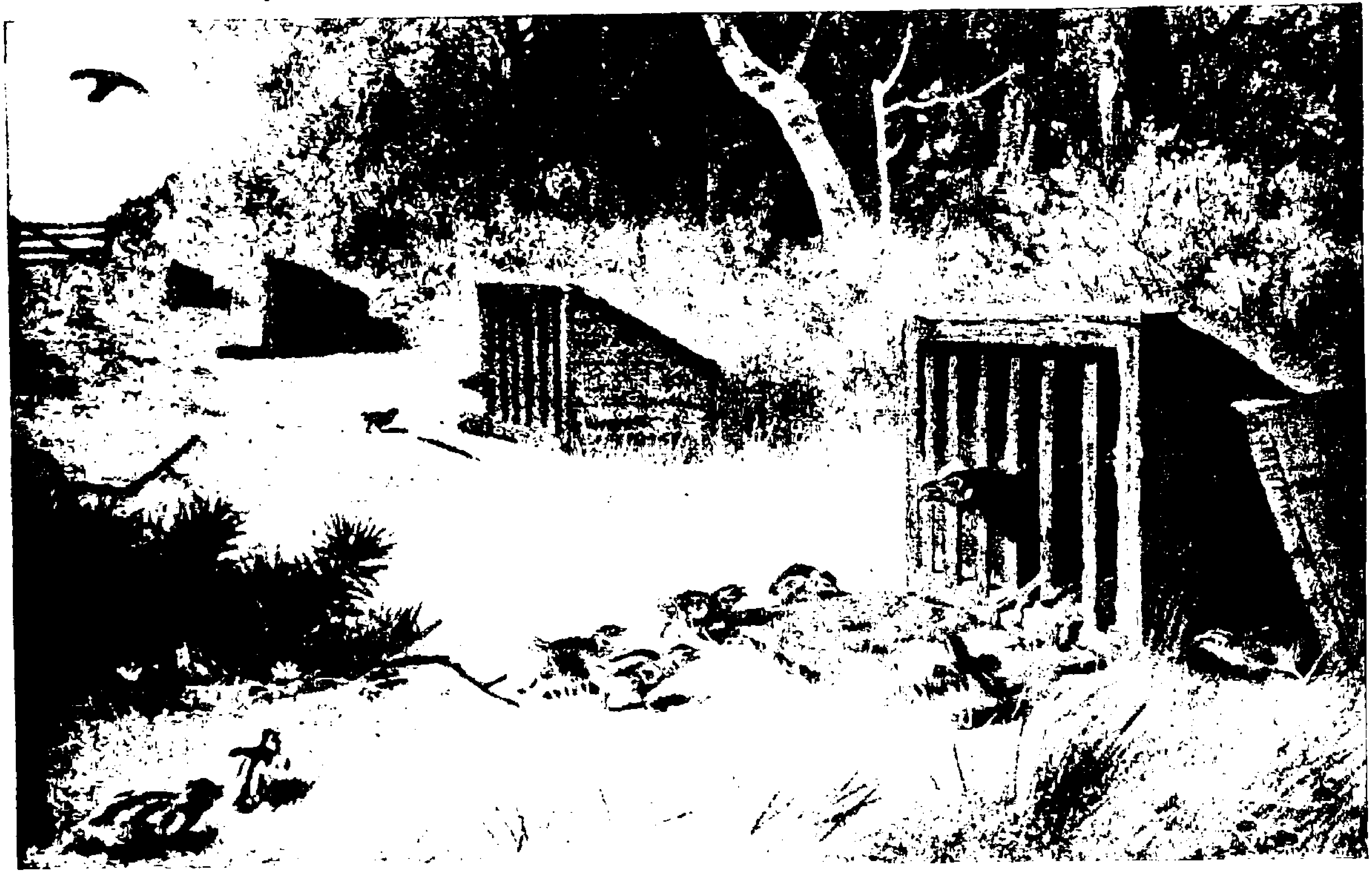
H.R.H. the Prince of Wales has just sanctioned the erection of a pheasantry, which, for a permanent one, is probably the most perfect ever seen. The corrugated iron fence which surrounds it rests upon low concrete walls, which go down a long way into the ground, so that the inclosure is practically vermin-proof. There are two large runs, each nearly an acre in extent, with bushes in the centre, and in these runs

from October or November until February may be seen some 500 or 600 hens, all in the best condition and plumage. In the latter month these are divided out, in the proportion of five hens to a cock, into the numerous small pens.

When all these birds are finally removed, after the laying and hatching season, the ground in each pen is dug up, lime freely used, and crops or grass sown. Of course, a permanent pheasantry can only be carried on in a healthy state from year to year by this system; and I believe greatly in the constant application of lime, gravel, and sand to the surface of the soil, which must also be thoroughly well drained.

Pens open at the top, which are accessible to the wild cock, are advocated by some; but I confess to a preference for the certainty of egg fertilisation which is got from healthy cocks confined with the hens. Where the pheasantry is well attended to, and every provision made for the natural food, habits, and wants of the species, pheasants should lose neither weight nor vigour in this temporary and luxurious confinement.

I strongly advocate the employment of women to manage pheasantries, and look after sitting hens and young birds. They must, of course, be under the



direction of the experienced head keeper; but for delicate handling of young birds, for treating their diseases, preserving the regularity of their feeding, and for the maternal instinct which should watch over them from the day of the laying of the first egg until they roost freely on the trees, I firmly believe that the matronly instinct of an intelligent woman will be found far better than the rougher care of the most conscientious male keeper.

The latter will have full employment in keeping down the vermin, procuring ants' eggs, night watching, and the like; but a woman will prove the best for the actual handling and management of the birds.

In conclusion, in rearing pheasants, as in every other branch of the cultivation or pursuit of animals by man, let the latter show his intelligence by invariably giving way to, or assisting, the superior instinct of the bird for his own good. He must run and scratch, and have varied and healthy food; give him loose earth to scratch at, plenty of room, and the variety, including green food, that he requires. He will not naturally stay long on cold, damp, or clayey ground; give him the contrary; give him shelter from rain and immunity from vermin and from sudden frights. In short, reproduce in confinement as nearly as possible the essentials of health in his wild life.

When dealing with the young birds, since you take them from the natural mother, and can give them only a foster mother confined to a small run or coop, you must be careful to place them under the conditions which the former would find for them in the wild state—ground warm and dry to their feet, shelter to protect them from winged and other vermin, and from cutting spring blasts or drenching showers, on some gentle slope, warmed and dried after the storms by air and sunshine, while you never relax your watchful care to prevent the spread of disease likely to occur from the close contact of large numbers, and to repel the attacks of the many predatory creatures which assail them.

In order to keep them, and realise from them in the proper quantities, let the woods in which you turn them out be such as by experience you know will suit their habits. There should be good access to arable ground and crops, or artificial patches cultivated for their benefit; covert nicely alternated between free spaces of dry ground under branching trees for them to run and scratch in, and warm thickets to squat or shelter under from the approach of danger or the onslaught of wintry blasts; here and there clusters of dark protecting evergreen trees for them to roost securely in at night.

If you and your keepers abide by these general rules, supplemented by the most practical of the details to be found in the best books,[1] to all of which your keepers should have free and constant access, you will be able without difficulty, and at a proper and reasonable cost, to produce the number of hand-reared birds which the size and character of your coverts, and the nature of the soil prevailing on your estate, entitle you to expect.

[1] Books which should form the 'gun-room or keeper's library,' and which you should provide for their constant use and reference, might include:

The Gamekeeper at Home }
The Amateur Poacher } By Richard Jefferies.
The Forester. By Brown and Nisbet.
British Forest Trees. By Nisbet.
Pheasants; their Natural History and Practical Management. By W. B. Tegetmeier.
The Badminton Library. *Shooting*, vols. i. and ii.
Practical Game-Preserving. By Carnegie.
Letters to Young Shooters. By Sir R. Payne-Gallwey.
Birds of Norfolk. By Stevenson.
Dog Breaking. By Hutchinson.
,, ,, ,, Stonehenge.

CHAPTER V

POLICY AND PROTECTION

Certain points may be suggested for the protection of a stock of game, attention to which may tend to neutralise the efforts, if not to minimise the number, of the poaching fraternity.

The poet, as we know, is born, not made; the cook also, at least in so far as roasting is concerned, lays claim to congenital genius. But the poacher, though often 'born,' is equally often 'made' by circumstances. The born poacher is, in reality, a keen sportsman and lover of nature, and as such we, who are or would like to be considered both, cannot but feel sympathy with and secretly admire him. Only we selfishly wish that he had been born in some part of the country remote from our own property, and would exercise his admirable instincts upon somebody else's pheasants and coverts rather than our own.

I am all for clemency towards this class, and, what is more important, for taking them in hand

when young. If we put ourselves for one moment in the position of the youth who, full of health and strength, with the eye of a hawk and the muscles of a cat, and all the instincts of a hunter strong within him, is compelled, day after day, to observe more fortunate persons enjoying sport, or engaged in the free and interesting life which is in these days devoted to its preparation and protection, while he ploughs the sullen earth or hoes the weeds from the monotonous rows of the crop, can we wonder if he leaves his appointed task at times to give play to the same instincts as we ourselves have such ample means of gratifying in a legitimate manner?

The born poacher, he with all these qualities, should be encouraged to take up some form of employment where they will be of value, and where he may be too well occupied to care any longer for illicit depredations upon other people's game. If he is to remain at home, he can be drafted early into private service, where sooner or later his capacity will prove of use to his master; if he is so weary of village monotony that he must be sent farther afield, this is the man that will make a useful soldier in far-off lands, or a successful colonist. This may sound Utopian, but there is really no difficulty in carrying it out, unless the man's poaching instincts lead him to distant places, and

he either deliberately leaves home to poach far away, or, being a stranger, visits your preserves from a distance. In either of these cases he has become a professional or 'made' poacher, and you can only treat him as such; he is beyond reclamation.

But first of all your head keeper should, and probably will, have a pretty good general knowledge of the characteristics of the youth of your immediate village surroundings; should take up with a friendly care such a one as I have described, and either engage him as watcher or under keeper, or, by bringing him to your notice, give him the chance of being removed to some more active and useful sphere, before he has become a confirmed loafer and bad character. The 'made' poacher can thus often be avoided in your own neighbourhood.

There is all the difference in the world between the man who does a bit of snaring or shooting on the sly, from mere love of sport, and the man who *steals* other people's game on a deliberate and wholesale system for profit.

The former, as I have said, should be treated in a somewhat paternal manner, and, above all, arrested while still young in what may prove a disastrous career. To this end it is of the highest importance that your head keeper should have the wit to preserve his

popularity in the neighbourhood. He should be a figure of importance, with a reputation for rigid discipline but perfect fairness and good temper. Wherever these qualities exist in such a man, his underlings will be found to have been well selected, men somewhat after his own pattern; and the petty class of poaching, which though it may never seriously damage the stock of game under his charge must yet be firmly repressed, will be reduced almost to nil.

The 'made' or confirmed poacher rarely works singly, and is or becomes a blackguard, a drunkard, and as a general rule a coward. Against this class of men it is the duty of your keepers to protect you. This can only be done successfully where the latter keep absolutely clear of the public-house influence, while cultivating good terms with the farmers, the rural police as well as those of the neighbouring towns, and the respectable population generally. I have already laid stress [1] on the paramount importance of the good relations between keepers and those who pay rent for or cultivate the soil. The woodmen, gardeners, hedgers and ditchers, carriers, and others whose comings and goings bring them constantly alongside or into the midst of the haunts of game must also be enlisted on the right side. If

[1] Vol. i. of this series, *The Partridge*.

all these, or any considerable section of them, are at perpetual war with your keeper, and look upon him as the roughest and most unjust of men, good-bye to your chance of ever keeping the amount of stock which your estate ought to produce.

Since writing the volume on 'Partridge,'[1] I am flattered to hear that my suggestion of a dinner, or a subscription to the beaters and drivers, has been tried in several places with excellent results. Any departure of this sort, which brings the farming and labouring class into closer touch with those who take their pleasure in the sports of the field, can produce nothing but good. Once the former see some chance of participating in or benefiting from the festivals of sport, they will be found, so long as they are well treated, more useful, and infinitely less expensive, than a whole army of tyrannous keepers. No stranger will set foot in the district without your keeper knowing it, and the depredations of the organised gangs of egg and game stealers will be pretty nearly checkmated.

A very important point for your keeper is never to prosecute unless he has a perfectly clear and fair case, and a pretty good certainty of a conviction. Any case which he takes into court on trifling

[1] Vol. i. of this series, *The Partridge*.

grounds, or with insufficient evidence, is sure to be set down to malice against the individual, and will prejudice him in the eyes of the local public as well as of the magistrates.

I must record an opinion that it is a great mistake for a gentleman, especially the owner of an estate or a member of his family, to take part in night watching or lying out for poachers. It has been done by many for whom I have a great respect, but has nevertheless always appeared, in my humble judgment, to be an error. It adds, for the keepers, to the risks and responsibilities of a conflict, tends in the direction of fomenting class hatred, and is sure if blows are struck to arouse a sympathy with the marauders which very probably would otherwise not exist.

In the colliery and manufacturing districts these questions are of great importance, the large numbers of the poaching gangs, and their violence when long-standing enmities are aroused, frequently resulting in serious encounters and sometimes in bloodshed.[1] In

[1] A head keeper was murdered by poachers at Wortley, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, in the time of the present writer's grandfather, and another some twenty years ago during the life-time of the present owner. A better system, however, has led to a much less violent state of things, and it is only during the continuance of long strikes in the colliery districts, when the whole countryside is in a lawless state, that serious encounters are to be feared.

such regions the keepers should prepare carefully before striking their blow. The object of this class of poachers is to outnumber the upholders of the law by three or four to one, and the latter should take care to be in sufficient force to thoroughly master their assailants, take all their apparatus, and secure convictions; the keepers will then find themselves comparatively unmolested for some time to come, while the resistance, if there be any, will not be serious enough to cause any tragedy.

With regard to pheasants in particular, the irruption of large gangs is not so likely, since they can do nothing except by beating the woods with guns and dogs in daylight, or by shooting at night. The latter may be best prevented by providing the proper shelter for the birds in every covert; a subject which will bring me, in the next chapter, to the few words I have to say on pheasant coverts in general.

But before leaving the question of poachers, the importance of keeping down the numbers of four-footed and feathered enemies of the pheasant must be urged. The fox undoubtedly is the most formidable of these, but in most parts of England he must be held sacred. It may be laid down at once that plenty of pheasants and plenty of foxes may be and are found together; and many of my readers must have

seen, as I have, enough foxes, even during a *first-rate* week's covert shooting, to satisfy any master of hounds. If your keeper persists in killing foxes, he will serve you a very bad turn with your neighbours, and sooner or later you will have to part with him; he will probably disclose other qualities which are against what should be his first object—his employer's interest. It is, of course, necessary in a hunting country to collect the eggs from the wild nests more exhaustively; but there are various old-fashioned dodges for protecting the sitting hen from foxes, while the peculiarity of the absence of natural scent of the bird during incubation will save the lives of a good many.[1] A very little gas tar, a little petroleum, or a strand of fine wire stretched between any two points near a nest, will in most cases deter the fox from going near it. Later on, for the wild broods, you must trust to Providence, while for your young chicks at the coops, a dog chained hard by at night, and constant watchfulness on the part of the keeper, are the only real protections.

But if you preserve pheasants highly in a hunting country, you must not only make up your own mind,

[1] This is doubted by some modern writers, yet it is, to my certain knowledge, believed by many keepers of experience; it is also quoted and apparently endorsed by Mr. Tegetmeier, than whom no greater authority exists on the absolute natural history of the pheasant.

but persuade your keepers also, to face the question that a certain sacrifice of pheasants is necessary for the preservation of foxes. Like nearly all other matters connected with this subject, it is, as I have said before, a question of money. A great deal may be done in your own interest, as well as in that of the hunt, by planting suitable gorse coverts, which the foxes will take to, as a rule, in preference to any other covert. In these, after they have grown to a certain height, you may keep a moderate head of rabbits, if you are on terms with your tenants which enable you to do so. It is idle to suppose that foxes will subsist on rabbits when there are plenty of pheasants; but if they have always got this class of food ready to their mouths, so to speak, they will be the less likely to raid your other coverts for birds; it will at any rate minimise the evil, and be always popular with the master of hounds, who will be able to make more sure of a find, and be more likely to get a run out of a moderate-sized gorse covert than from large and straggling woods.

Crows,[1] jackdaws, magpies, jays, and hawks must be constantly kept down in numbers, more especially sparrow-hawks, the most destructive of all in the rearing season. As to rooks, they will undoubtedly at times consume pheasant and partridge eggs to a large

[1] Carrion and hooded crows, as distinguished from rooks.

extent. Two years ago, during the great drought, they destroyed thousands, especially partridge eggs—as though they were in search of food with moisture in it, or were short of some supply, probably of insect nourishment, which would be more plentiful in a wetter season.

But serious as these spasmodic inroads are on the part of the rooks, for they do not seem to trespass regularly, I think one should hesitate before destroying a rookery, one of the most interesting and picturesque features of the country, and one which holds an undoubted place in the balance of nature. Hen pheasants will in most seasons bring out their broods safely right under the trees of the rookery, and they no doubt thrive on the morsels of food dropped by their black neighbours while feeding their young.

To destroy weasels, stoats, cats, and last, but not least, stray dogs which have taken regularly to poaching, is, of course, an elementary part of the keeper's business. But it may be noted that payment to your keepers per head of vermin destroyed is a bad system, open to fraud and abuse. If practised at all it should be *only* during the nesting and hatching season, say from April to August.

Rats are an expensive and troublesome kind of vermin; expensive because they devour in these days

of high feeding an enormous quantity of the corn intended for the birds, and troublesome because it is very difficult to trap or destroy them in any effectual way without injury or alarm to your young birds. I have seen them in scores along a ride calmly feeding with the young pheasants. I can only suggest that the keepers, combining with the farmers, should pay more attention to ferreting and destroying them out of the stacks and hedgerows during the autumn and winter months than is commonly done.

It will be observed how all these questions bring us back to the same point—namely, the qualities of your head keeper, and, through him, of his assistants. He must in these difficult days intelligently interpret and loyally carry out the liberality of your policy. He must also observe that high-class game preserving is nowadays an important industry and a valuable accessory and stimulus to trade, and that consequently he must maintain sensible and friendly relations towards those with whom his business brings him in contact.

The old-fashioned second-rate keeper, who was like a survival of the private companies of men-at-arms kept by the feudal barons, and as such was too often a by-word for brutal and licentious conduct, and the enemy of everybody for miles around, is quite played out.

As I have said above, a more intelligent, better educated, more urbane, and, above all, more business-like man is now required, and, I am happy to say, already to be found in many places.

He should be encouraged to read and to study natural history, and where possible to travel more about the country in the pursuit of experience in his own profession; while his employer should keep the wholesome checks upon him which the manager of a department must always expect from the head of any enterprise.

CHAPTER VI

LANDSCAPE AND LARDER

FROM what I have written on the severely practical side of pheasant preserving, it might be inferred that I am in favour of a dull uniformity in the shape or arrangement of coverts, or that I could placidly contemplate the defacement or destruction of the beauties of Nature with a view to the production of so many more pheasants, or the burning of so many more cartridges. This is far, very far, from representing what I feel or even believe. As may be imagined, after many years devoted to art, my sympathies are specially engrossed by the picturesque side of country life and of sport; and I am particularly anxious to suggest to, and if possible persuade, my readers that what is good for game is in most cases more likely to be picturesque in appearance than that which is not.

The inverse view certainly holds good; ground which is picturesque is almost always suitable for game of some kind—witness the heaths of Norfolk and

Suffolk, which are such an addition for breeding and shooting purposes to the strictly cultivated land; or the broken ground below the moors in Scotland or in the English moorland districts, which form shelters and nurseries for the grouse ground proper. Witness the moors themselves, or such an extent of pure forest ground as the New Forest. But I am perhaps digressing into mere truisms; we must go more practically into details.

There are certain exceptions to this rule for the actual harbouring of pheasants. For instance, a large beech wood, though beautiful in itself where the trees are well grown, will never hold them, since you cannot find any undergrowth which will flourish in it. Yet, on the other hand, the beech mast will help to feed them, and they can run, as they love to do, easily under the great trees, as you will find to your cost should you have well-stocked coverts of other sorts, and there are large beech woods on the far side of your boundary. On the other hand, if you have beech woods in the centre of your own ground you will find them of great value. Now a word as to these same woods. If they consist of magnificent timber trees already in their full prime, having been judiciously thinned by a former generation, leave them alone; you will not better them as a ranging and feeding ground,

though you cannot shoot your pheasants out of them, while to cut down or maim them would be an outrage. But if, as is so often the case, especially if you buy an estate which has not been well looked after, you find many acres of beech in which there are not more than three or four good trees to every acre, then you have a great opportunity. By cutting out—always with an eye to the picturesque appearance of the wood—and leaving the good trees, you will make open spaces, and create a wilder and more broken appearance in the covert than before. These spaces you can either leave alone—in which case no sooner is the shade of the beeches removed than brambles or other form of undergrowth will make its gradual appearance—or you can plant them with any sort of undergrowth suitable to soil and climate, and with a few young trees. Holly and most of the firs look beautiful intermixed with fine beeches.

Your wood will really be vastly improved in appearance if this is well done, and the patches cut out are not made square or round, or in any way uniform in shape. And as to your birds, the result will be equally satisfactory. They will still have a goodly proportion of bare ground on which to run and scratch under the great trees, as well as a supply of the beech mast which they love for food. They will also have great spaces where the sunlight will penetrate—

a most important point—and shelter and warmth in the undergrowth which this sunlight will foster. Open spaces within the inclosure of woods are specially attractive to game, to which air and light are as essential as to plants ; they afford them pleasant spots on the cold and windy days, where they can find shelter from the blast while catching every warm ray from the sun.

As to your shooting, every incident in a wood usually yields its incident to the sport, and the most varied ground is consequently the most attractive to shoot over ; while, from a practical point of view, you will find yourself able to hold pheasants in considerable numbers in coverts where it was previously found impossible to do any good. Where such coverts lie on a hillside, the cutting out and consequent thickening of the undergrowth should be done as much as possible on the higher side, since the pheasants, rising for the most part out of the undergrowth, will then pass over the guns in position on lower ground at the desirable height.

The covert may, and should where practicable, be further strengthened as a holding or lying place for pheasants by the addition of a strip or inclosure of broom or gorse on the upper side. This should have either a broad grass ride or irregular open spaces

within it on the same principle as before, for the birds to stretch and sun themselves in. I cannot urge too strongly the formation of such nurseries, as additions or annexes to old woods which have become hollow underneath; and if well done, with an eye to appearance, these need not detract from, but on the contrary can be made to add to, the beauty of the woods as features of the landscape. The very natural inclination of most agents, foresters &c. is to erect fencing, for economy's sake, in straight lines, and consequently you will often see young plantations or gorse coverts disfiguring, by their uncompromising rectangular shapes, the natural beauty of hill and dale. Here, again, we have the question of money, but in a very slight degree; for it is absurd to suppose that the man who can afford to put up, say, a mile of fencing cannot afford to make it a mile and an eighth; which would be all the increase required, if any, to run it in the curves which the lie of the ground properly suggests, and which would make the whole difference to its appearance.

The open ride, or some space left within the inclosure of the broom covert, should be ploughed and sown with buckwheat, barley, and oats, while a row or two of cabbages or turnips will still further improve it, and help to keep the birds at home when

the grain is exhausted. Wherever pheasants are required they must, of course, have access to arable land ; but as this does not always lie adjoining the coverts which you wish to stock with birds, its place must, where possible, be supplied by taking a piece of ground and using it as above described. If it lies between two woods, or if in planting new woods you provide for it beforehand by leaving an open space in the centre of your plantation, being careful to choose a piece which can be treated by the plough, you will derive even greater benefit from it than if it lies outside. A day or two's ploughing can always be hired from the farmers, and the sowing should be done by your keepers, who should learn to look upon this as one of the most important matters connected with the rearing and keeping of pheasants.

I am a great believer in broom for pheasants, as it is very warm overhead, and they can run under it with freedom and sheltered from wet and wind. But, like many other things which you may desire to plant, it is a very favourite food with rabbits and hares, which will eat the young shoots with avidity. It will be necessary, therefore, to wire in all broom or gorse coverts, as well as the freshly planted open spaces which I have mentioned above, until they are sufficiently grown. Even then I would as much as pos-

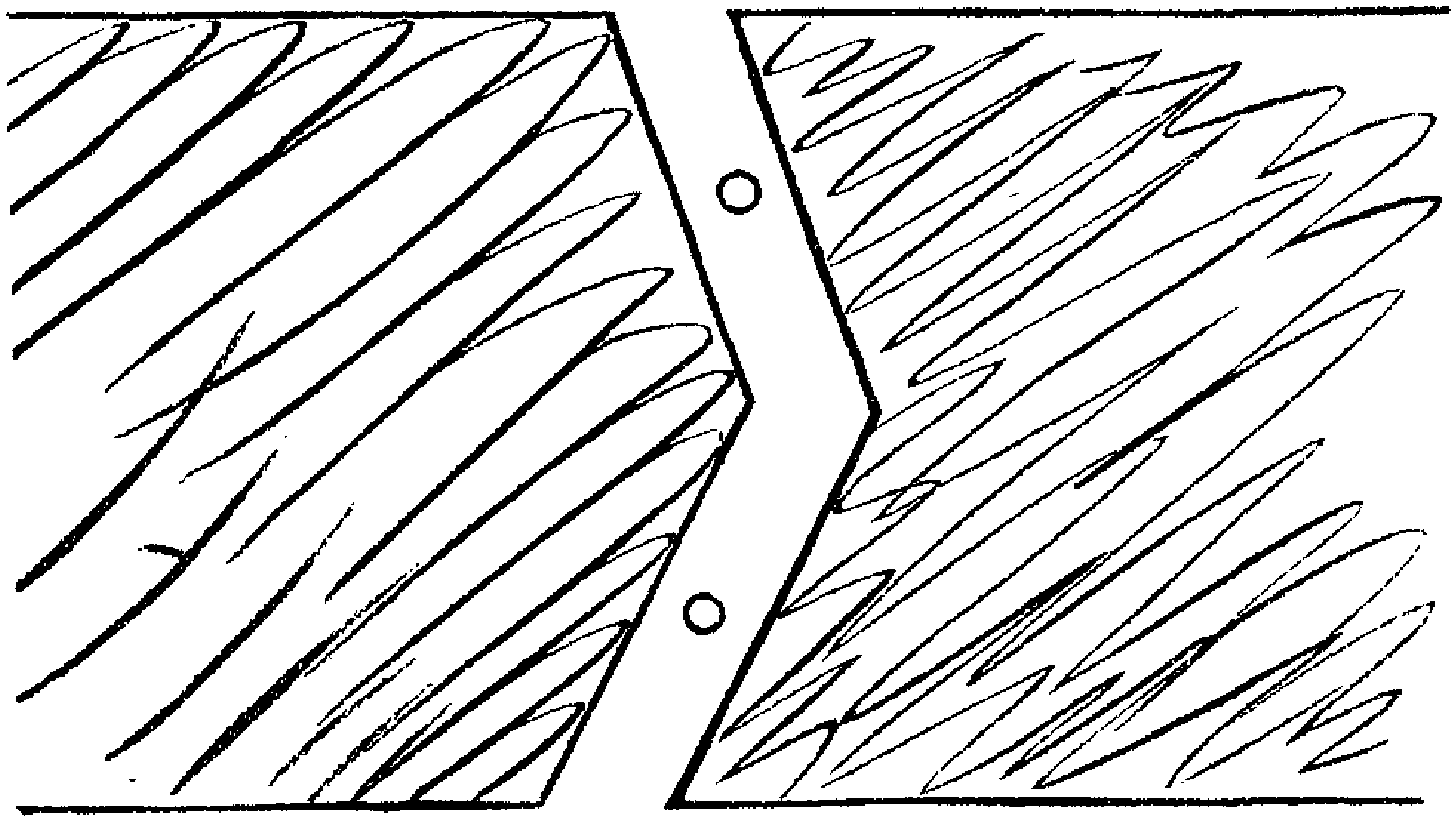
sible keep rabbits from them, as in a hard winter they will destroy the greater portion of even the older plants.

There are, however, many plants, which rabbits will not eat unless absolutely famine-stricken, to be used in filling these spaces; among these privet, berberis (*Mahonia Aquifolium*), and the common bramble,[1] easily propagated by pegging in suckers, may be suggested with others which you will find detailed, with hints for their protection, in the latest works on forestry.

The two principles here advocated—the cutting out of open spaces, and the addition of broom coverts alongside of old woods—I have seen tried and proved to improve the stock as well as the quality of the shooting. I suggested them some years ago to Sir Edward Lawson, who at that time found great difficulty in keeping the required stock of pheasants on his estate at Hall Barn in Buckinghamshire, the woods being old, hollow, and largely composed of worthless beech. The result has been so satisfactory that it is now for its size one of the best shooting

[1] Rhododendron, though rabbits do not eat it, is not really good covert for pheasants. They dislike going into it when driven, probably because it is difficult for them to rise out of, though it is certainly valuable in certain places, as shelter from rough weather. It should never be planted for the purpose of flushing birds out of it.

estates in England; and the beat known as 'Hangings and Jennings,' where you shoot all day in a sheltered valley between coverts on the slopes on either hand, and where every bird comes over really high, is an excellent example of a beautiful day's shooting on a spot which under an older *régime* gave but indifferent sport.



In making rides for the express purpose of your sport, you must, as I have before observed, do so without reference to existing roads or paths, unless these run favourably for your object. In planting new coverts, where cross rides are intended for future use to kill ground game or pheasants, a very simple expedient is, instead of making them rectangular to the covert, to do so as shown in the diagram above.

The two guns placed forward can here shoot freely at game crossing the ride between them, instead of either shooting one another or letting the game escape, which is what has to happen when the ride is straight.

In every covert there should be a proportion of spruces, silver firs and other thick evergreen trees, planted in clusters as shelter for the roosting of pheasants, and if the place for these be judiciously chosen they will add to the beauty of the woods as a whole. They are your only sure protection against shooting by poachers, and if placed as near as possible in the centre of your coverts, are of great use in keeping birds at home.

I am not one of those who believe that pheasants where they have good food and shelter can be easily driven from their favourite haunts, and think a good deal of nonsense is talked about 'disturbing the coverts.' Hares are, of course, easily disturbed and driven from a wood, and where these are an object the place must be kept very quiet for some weeks before the shooting. But as regards pheasants, even the drawing of the covert by the hounds, or occasional shooting at wood-pigeons coming to roost, will do very little harm, if any; and should the covert lie well in the centre of your property, I think the birds should be encouraged to fly and run about. But they must

be sedulously driven in from hedgerows and out of root crops, or you will lose many.

Enormous quantities of pheasants are now reared in England and Scotland, and it is therefore no longer interesting to record the totals obtained on good shooting estates. Suffice it to say that it is easy enough, in a favourable county, and with a certain expenditure, to kill 2,000 pheasants in one day, or even more if you wish it; while the number of places where from 600 to 1,000 are recorded as one day's bag are probably twenty times as numerous as when I began to shoot nearly thirty years ago. As I have said before, I think this an advantage, and I have never met a man who cares for shooting, let him write or protest as he may, who will not gladly join a party for one of these heavy days whenever he gets the chance.

As there are many false impressions amongst those who do not share in the sport of pheasant or any other shooting, my duty is to record the fact that it is generally conducted, as it should be, with the greatest liberality to all concerned, as well as to thousands who are not concerned in it. The great game preservers give away enormous quantities of this expensive product, and sell much less than is generally supposed. The Prince of Wales royally

leads the way, for of the large quantity of game killed annually at Sandringham not one head is ever sold, and many hundreds of people of all ranks can testify to the thoughtful kindness which prompts his Royal Highness's countless gifts. It used to be the boast of Drumlanrig that 25,000 head of game were killed on that estate alone during the season, every head not consumed for the use of the house being given away, and the present Duke of Buccleuch keeps up the same liberal tradition on all his estates. Many others are there whom I could name who look upon their game preserving merely as a means of pleasing their friends, giving employment in their own neighbourhood, and doing a little good to others at a distance.

The qualities of the genial, generous country gentleman are still to be found, and I am happy to say are no less common among those whose fortunes and acres are newly acquired than among the hereditary owners of the soil.

To many of these of both sorts I, like others who do not own an acre of land, owe grateful thanks for happy days; which, with my apologies for the incompleteness and imperfections of these necessarily limited writings, I tender with the greatest possible pleasure.

THE COOKERY OF THE PHEASANT

BY

ALEXANDER INNES SHAND

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THE COOKERY OF THE PHEASANT

THE most illustrious gastronomists have with unanimous consent pronounced the pheasant the best of game birds. Individuals will, of course, have their predilections. Some may own to a partiality for the bitter of the grouse: others will confess to a sentimental passion for the thighs and trail of snipe, woodcock, and plover. As for the unpretending partridge, it is a universal favourite. But were *gourmets* to be brought up for a *plébiscite*, as the Athenians, according to the veracious Plutarch, were called upon to assign a rank to their great generals, if the pheasant did not take the lead in the lists, at least he would almost invariably be assigned the second place. Nor is it difficult to suggest reasons for the precedence. He is indebted for it, principally to his genuine merits and partly to adventitious circumstances. He is to be found in any wood, where circumstances are tolerably favour-

able, from the bramble brakes and arbutus groves of Western Ireland to the hanging covers on the hills in the Asian Highlands. Where he has not free range, with fair immunity from poachers, he is absolutely dependent on artificial protection. For the charm which popularises him for the table lies in his being the connecting link between the wild game bird and the coop-reared capon of the poultry yard. He is plump, well-sized, and delicately flavoured. The resin-scented capercailzie and the noble bustard, unhappily extinct in England—who, by the way, runs very much to sinew from excessive pedestrian exercise—are, like the wild turkey, far too formidable in proportions to figure gracefully in the second course. As for the peacock, with the swan he has long ago gone out of fashion, and indeed the glory of the bird is in his plumage, although a tender young peafowl is by no means to be despised. So that the pride of place has fallen indisputably to the pheasant. Brillat-Savarin, who, as he owns himself, affected an appetite he unfortunately did not possess, does not disguise his preference for the beccafico. That delightful little bird has the flavour and melting bouquet of the sun-warmed figs on which he gorges. But perhaps the most pathetic passage in the sentimental 'Physiologie de Goût,' is

where the writer breathes out the impassioned wish that the incomparable beccafico might have the bulk of the pheasant, with which it has so much in common. However, the Epicurean of the cuisine and the *basse-cour* consoles himself there and elsewhere with the well-worn reflection, that this sublunary world is not a Paradise, and that there must be some suspicion of regrets in the most admirably arranged banquet.

But *à propos* to the condition of approaching to perfection, we are reminded that we have been wrong in talking of the ideal pheasant in the masculine. Even cooks of world-wide fame, such as the illustrious Gouffé, have been betrayed, apparently by meretricious admiration for gay plumage, into recommending the selection of cocks for the *plats*. We fancy it is a survival of the barbaric tradition of sending birds in their feathers to the tables, when guests were rather voracious than discriminating. It would be as much in keeping with the fitness of things if the modern sportsman, after a successful *battue*, came down to do the agreeable to beauty at the dinner-table in muddy shooting boots and blood-bespattered gaiters. Be that as it may, there can be no doubt whatever that whether as a maid in her first season or a juvenile matron, the hen is infinitely superior to the cock. We must all

have regretted on receiving gifts of game our previous liberality to the gamekeeper; for that functionary's idea of gratitude and friendship is sure to take the form of selecting the cocks in the finest plumage which would gladden the soul of a birdstuffer. The best way to deal with them is to hang them up indefinitely, and then when they threaten to take French leave of the hooks, to smother them under pie crust in mushrooms and bacon fat. With that treatment even the tough drumsticks become practicable, but we need scarcely say that the *fumet* of the pheasant has evaporated. Or there is another way, as our cookery books have it, which we have often adopted in the Highlands with satisfaction, when going in for mixed shooting. The patriarchal pheasants and the muscular old blackcocks who fell crashing through the brushwood, awaking all the echoes in the depths of the precipitous glens, we found to make admirable cock-a-leekie. In England, where cock-a-leekie is almost as unfamiliar as swallow-nest soup, they may of course be consigned to the stock-pot as the last resort.

But with the pheasant, whether old or young, everything depends on keeping and hanging. Brillat-Savarin, as a master of gastronomic philosophy, speaks with no uncertain sound, and puts the matter

with his usual epigrammatic terseness. The reverence with which he approaches the subject is a sublime tribute to the pheasant.

'He is an enigma of which the solution is only revealed to adepts: they only can appreciate the savour in all its piquancy. . . . When the pheasant is eaten within three days after his death, there is nothing to distinguish him. He has neither the delicacy of a capon nor the perfume of a quail.

'When cooked at the exact moment, how marvellous the transformation! The flesh is tender, sublime, and of the most *recherché* flavour, for it blends the savour of fowl and venison. The most delicate point is when the pheasant begins to decompose: then the aroma develops and combines with an oil, which to etherealise itself needed some measure of fermentation, like coffee-oil, which is only to be obtained by excessive heat.'

Then the practical philosopher goes on to indicate the signs by which you may gather that the bird is ready for the spit. These we may as well pass over in silence, for the technicalities of the kitchen are far from appetising. But Savarin sums up the whole matter in the dictum that the moment is suggested by intuition. The faintest odour floating in the air will spare a veritable culinary genius the

trouble of fingering the feathers and scanning the changing colours of the skin. Yet the more obvious indications are undoubtedly useful to artists or *cordons bleus*, who are simply well-meaning and conscientious.

M. Kettner made his living by the science which Savarin cultivated as a connoisseur, although in a consistent course of experimental philosophy. And Kettner goes further, for he lays down the law that the pheasant must always be hung up till he falls down. We suspect, however, from the unwonted enthusiasm with which he expatiates on the gamey scent of the pheasant that his senses were not over-delicate. In fact the cooks of German or Provençal extraction must almost necessarily be handicapped by the disadvantages of their early education. Sauerkraut and bouillebaisse may be excellent in their way, but no youth who has been brought up on such strong-flavoured delicacies can have the most fastidious of noses or the most sensitive of palates. You might as well hope to do justice to the delicacy of a *flounder-souché* after a dinner of red herrings. The time for which game ought to be kept is a question of sentiment, as well as of taste. Some people have a not altogether unreasonable prejudice against eating anything that is supposed to be decomposing. That unfortunate prepossession

is fatal to intelligent gourmandise; and we can only say that those purists may as well leave game alone, and content themselves with the somewhat insipid spring chickens, which likewise lose by precipitate cooking. But there is one remarkable feature with the pheasant, and a pleasing trait it is. Keep him as long as you will, within any reasonable limits, and the 'oysters' with the delicate pickings from the back are not only eatable, but enjoyable; whereas with woodcock, snipe, or plover, if you are to enjoy the trail, you must sacrifice the bird, and notably the thighs, with their splendid possibilities. A warm controversy has been waged, by the way, between the comparative attractions of the wing and thigh of the pheasant. It strikes us that it is but the old story of the shield seen from opposite sides, for it is all a question of age and sex. We envy no one who tries manfully to tackle the thigh of a middle-aged or elderly male. But in our opinion no *blanc* of the choicest pheasant can in any way compare with the softly subdued, yet penetrating savour of a feminine leg of ample proportions, and especially when there is a gartering of the yellow fat.

Talking of the yellow fat, naturally leads us on to the question of pheasant feeding. We said that the pheasant owed much to adventitious circumstances, and assuredly no game bird depends so much upon his

diet and the localities in which he has been reared. We have remarked that every disquisition on cookery goes back to the Romans—if not to the times of their Trojan ancestors and to the Homeric feasts before the walls of Ilium. We had almost forgotten that remarkable people, the terror of the young gentlemen at Dr. Blimber's academy. But we are irresistibly led to moralise on the vanity of mortal aspirations, when we think of the fond delusions of Apicius, Lucullus, or Vitellius as they feasted on the belated game which was served at their superabundant boards. Some of these imperial epicures were gluttons rather than *gourmands*, and had no sort of pretension to be *gourmets*. They were perpetually grasping at shadows, and confounding ostentation with luxury. They valued a dish for its cost and rarity, and rewarded a cook with a farm for some mad freak of original extravagance. Fancy pretending to enjoy Whitstable natives on the Seven Hills before refrigerating chambers were invented! What could be more grotesquely absurd than silencing five hundred melodious songsters to furnish an imperial *entrée* of nightingale tongues! The culinary system which ended with the fall of the Empire was essentially vicious. There were no pheasant coverts in the Campagna, and the cheerful crow of the cock of the low country woods

never greeted the early woodman on the Alban Hills. But the pheasants figured conspicuously all the same at Roman feasts; they were probably imported from Pontus or Cappadocia. No doubt they came in coops, and were hand-crammed on the voyage. We can imagine the condition in which the unlucky fowls were delivered to the poulterers at Ostia, after a sad experience of shaking and sea-sickness. Nowadays our most lavish gourmands are wise enough to avoid such follies. Mohammed travels to the mountains in place of demanding impossible miracles, and if connoisseurs desire foreign delicacies in perfection, they go to eat them on the spot. There are not many enthusiasts like the creoles in 'Tom Cringle's Log,' who came all the way from Jamaica to Biggleswade for the sake of the Bedfordshire eels, and whose pilgrimage ended in melancholy disappointment. But we have known travellers who have gone to Nijni-Novgorod, that they might try the sterlet in the famous Volga restaurants; and we have heard of globe-trotters who have missed a steamer at Singapore, that they might get over a first disappointment and acquire a taste for the mangosteen. The financiers and the farmers of the French revenues did a great work in their day, and their selfish and ostentatious profusion has been of lasting service to culinary science. But

modern taste has been purified, and its tendency is towards simplification. The *menus* of the most sumptuous tables have gradually been cut down, till moderation in high places can hardly go further. So the pheasant has been coming more and more into favour, for where the *plats* are few and select, he is more and more indispensable.

For if he is not acclimatised congenially in all the Western countries, where civilisation has diffused itself, at least he is within easy reach. Yet, as we said, he depends greatly on location, and in these days of express trains and swift and punctual delivery, it is sometimes better to bring the birds from a distance. This may be safely laid down as an axiom, that the wilder the pheasant, the better the flesh. The corollary is, that buying at a poulterer's is very much of a lottery, in which the blanks are many, and the prizes few. The shops are overstocked in the season of the *battues*, and the vast majority of the birds have been fattened like domestic poultry. In his wild condition the pheasant is a roving epicure. When the sun is sinking towards the horizon he wanders forth in quest of a supper. Naturally, for his *pièces de résistance*, he pays a visit in the autumn to the stubbles, with their rich scattering of golden grain. Nothing in the way of insects comes much amiss to him; he pecks very

promiscuously among the grubs and the worms. But like the Alsatian geese, to which the author of the *Almanach des Gourmands* sophistically attributes consolatory visions of the glorious destinies awaiting them, when they are condemned to pass on their liver complaints to the purveyors of Strasburg *pâtés*, the pheasant seems to feed himself philanthropically, in consideration of the palates of the *gourmets*. It is all very well, the communicating artificial flavour, by the introduction of a stuffing or the invention of a sauce. The real secret is to select the birds or the beasts, which have unconsciously been flavouring themselves through a short but well-spent existence. So the Southdown is worth nothing, in the second summer or so, when he has been sent away from the thyme-scented pastures which are salted by the fresh sea breeze; and the *pré-salé* saddle of the Parisian restaurants, although possibly the pedigree of the mutton may be pure enough, is for the most part a shameful imposture.

The wild pheasant frequents the spinneys and the hedgerows, not only from his naturally shy instincts, but because they offer him an eternally varying diet. He would be safer and less disturbed in the thick undergrowth of our extensive woodlands. But he loves the tender shoots of the hedge timber, and revels fastidiously on seeds and hips-and-haws, and more

especially on the berries of the elder. In the Scotch Highlands we have known him attracted to great distances by straggling clumps of the rowan or mountain ash, or even by tempting single trees. The pungent flavour of the rowan berry is distinctly perceptible and singularly piquant. It is remarkable, by the way, that the fieldfare, who is as partial to these ruddy clusters as the pheasant, should be so foolishly neglected by the English cook. For a *pâté* the fieldfare may be as good as anything that can come from Périgueux or Pithiviers; and in Flanders they send him to table in an earthenware pan, frizzling among berries of the juniper. The pheasant, as might be assumed from his sprightly habits and his cheerful mien, his omnivorous appetite, and an admirable digestion, whenever he has the chance gorgeson acorns and beech nuts, like any of the swine in Westphalia or Estremadura. And those nuts, assimilated through an active life, are worth any quality of chestnuts or truffles in a sauce or a stuffing. We knew an old farmer, whose Michaelmas geese always fetched the highest prices at Leadenhall; although, in fact, the deliveries were post-dated, and the geese never reached the salesman till some time after Michaelmas Day. We asked the reason, and the venerable breeder explained, although not without a certain reluctance, that he

kept his flocks till the fall of the acorn, and the gain was as great in the weight as in the flavour.

Necessarily, that elementary fact as to dieting did not escape the notice of the intelligent Brillat-Savarin. Discussing game in general, he says, 'It also derives great part of its value from the nature of the soil on which it is nourished: the flavour of a red partridge from Périgord is very different from that of a red partridge from the Sologne'—and both, as we may remark in passing, are distinctly inferior to their grey kinsfolk; 'and whereas the hare killed on the plains in the neighbourhood of Paris only appears a very indifferent *plat*, the leveret born on the sun-burned *coteaux* of Valramey or the Upper Dauphiny is perhaps the most perfumed of all quadrupeds.' Hayward tells us, in his 'Art of Dining,' which is a veritable mine of gastronomic research, though the writer's theories were greatly superior to his practice, that the Duke of Rutland of that day never would hear of a Leicestershire partridge being dressed for his table, since 'partridges are worth nothing in a grass district.' The same may be said much more emphatically of pheasants. Bred between the maggots and the buckwheat, the birds may run to bulk, but they lose in flavour. At one time the staff of the Austrian Legation in London happened to be made up of *viveurs* from Vienna, who were connoisseurs in the

pleasures of the table. They greatly appreciated the solid side of the English cuisine: the turtle from Painter's; the turbot from the North Sea and the Channel; even the haunches of fallow venison from the English parks; and especially those British saddles and sirloins which had been glorified by the enthusiasm of 'The Druid.' They were generally disappointed in the game, although the Highland grouse—certainly not the Yorkshiremen—were a revelation to them. But above all they were disappointed with the flavourless pheasants. In moments of expansion over the wine and dessert, they unbosomed themselves to an Englishman who was an *habitué* of the Embassy. He said little, but his national pride being piqued, he thought all the more. Some days afterwards his Austro-Hungarian friends were dining with him at a famous dining club. It was rather as matter of courtesy that they condescended to try the pheasants, although seductively browned to a shade by one of the most accomplished of *rôtisseurs*. The second mouthful changed civility into surprise, and the host was overwhelmed with compliments, the sincerity of which was unimpeachable, for the birds disappeared. They had been sent specially for the occasion from the Welsh woods of a peer who had domains in various Scotch and English counties. But, as the entertainer knew,

like his Grace of Rutland, he always imported his pheasants wherever he might be, and from those Welsh woods of his own, with their succulent, natural shrubberies.

These Viennese gentlemen had been spoiled for anything else by familiarity with the birds of Bohemia and Upper Austria. There, with the free range of vast forests, interspersed with farms and patches of vegetable ground round the cottages, the pheasants have all possible conditions in their favour. Nowhere are they to be eaten in greater perfection than in the older restaurants of Vienna. In England, as we have said, there are long odds against the buyer and consumer. In Austria the odds are all the other way, and failure is an extreme improbability. Next to the birds of Bohemia we should rank those of the Ardennes; but, indeed, all the game of south-eastern Belgium is super-excellent. Happily for the fame of the Parisian *restaurateurs*, there are excellent pheasants to be shot or snared in such forests as Chantilly or Villers Cotterets, and in such vast preserves as those of Ferrières. But, alas, in this as in other respects, we have to regret the backward civilisation of Spain. No districts are naturally better suited to the pheasant than many of the provinces of the Peninsula. The soil is dry, yet in districts the land is well watered;

the atmosphere is balmy, and the undergrowth aromatic. But for many reasons the grandees and great landowners have never turned their attention to game breeding and game preserving. In a succession of revolutions the people have made wild work with the woods, and each Spanish peasant is a born poacher. Till yesterday, and—in many districts—even to-day, every muleteer carries a long single-barrel across his saddle-bow. His wary eye is always on the watch for anything that will relieve the monotony of the *puchero*. We suspect if a Spanish gentleman took to serious preserving, he would make a leap into the frying-pan of the Irish landlord. There used to be fair wild pheasant shooting a generation ago in the Asturias; but there was a Marquess, who was a *grand seigneur* and a benevolent despot, and his dependants were as conservative as the Bretons of the *Chouannerie*. He had always a warm welcome for English sportsmen, and could even venture to bring over eggs from England, with a fair prospect of seeing the broods come to maturity. Yet we may presume, from the name of the Isle des Faisans in the Bidassoa, that pheasants must once have been fairly plentiful in these parts, though, according to a story of Brillat-Savarin, the bird, as late as 1780, was a very great rarity in wealthy Lyons. Brillat-Savarin writes with such an air of veracity, that

we are always inclined to believe him reliable. Here he relates how an inhuman practical joke was played on a certain Chevalier de Langeau. The worthy old gentleman had beggared himself at the Court, and came on a scanty pittance to *exploiter* his title and ribbon at industrial Lyons, where he was made welcome at the most sumptuous tables. He supped one night with a rich banker, and on the strength of a long invitation, he expected great things. The supper was good, but far from *recherché*. As it went on he resigned himself, like a man of sense, and, making up for lost time, he ate to repletion. Indeed, a magnificent truffled turkey had given him no great reason to complain. Just when he was luxuriously disposing himself for digestion, the scene changed to his sorrow; but we must let Savarin give the touching *dénouement* in his own eloquent words. The Chevalier had pulled himself together, and struggled like a man to trifle with a succession of tantalising dainties. Heroic humanity could do no more, and 'what were his feelings at the third remove, when he saw snipes arriving by the dozen, white with fat and slumbering on the regular *rôtier*; a pheasant, a bird which was then extremely rare, and which had been brought from the banks of the Seine; a fresh tunny, and all that the cookery of the time and the oven could present as being most delicate in

entremets.' The Chevalier, betrayed by a friend and touched in his tenderest point, got up with what dignity he could after his gorging, and vindictively nursed the sense of the injury, till he yielded, after many months, to the pleadings of his stomach and palate. Brillat-Savarin of course tells his story well, and he treats it from the patriotic point of view. But we are reminded of the comedy in Goldsmith's letter of gratitude for the haunch of venison from Lord Clare, and, in the course of researches into cosmopolitan gastro-lore, we find parallels in the culinary anecdotes of many nations. Truffles are generally associated with pheasants, as geese fattened on farms with apple orchards go with apple sauce, and as the wild boar, for some more recondite reason, is served with barberry sauce or a sweet dressing of cherries or plums. And truffles may sometimes be judiciously introduced in pheasantry, as is shown specially in the *faisan à la Sainte-Alliance*. Brillat-Savarin swore by that dish, yet as a profound thinker and analyst he remarks that the pheasant is scarcely succulent enough to do justice to the aromatic dryness of the truffle.

So we come back to what, in the words of Solomon, is the conclusion of the whole matter—that the excellence of pheasants depends on the rearing. In England we know nothing to equal the Norfolk

birds. It is notorious that the county is famous for its wheat fields. The soil and climate are phenomenally dry, so that the birds are always in excellent condition, and there are varieties of berries on the undergrowth with snug sitting in the bracken beds. The heaviest pheasants have been shot in Norfolk *battues*, although size is of course a secondary consideration. We may add, although it may appear paradoxical, that in our opinion, and for similar reasons, the pheasant is at his best where he is most of an exotic. There is no more glorious sport, for example, than in the copses overhanging Loch Lomond, or in those sloping down to the seaweed-strewn shores of Argyllshire. There is seldom regular preserving, and the birds are comparatively few and far between. But if they could be head-marked and consigned to the leading London poulterers they would inevitably command the highest prices. We have referred already to the objections to buying game, when you are ignorant of the county of its *prévenance*. But besides that, when an inexperienced individual goes marketing on his own account, he is pretty sure to make an unfortunate choice. Whatever may be said of *battues* from the sporting point of view—and much ignorant nonsense is talked about them—it is certain that they are injurious to the interests of the kitchen. When the

birds are rising simultaneously by the score, and the guns may be shooting jealously, too many pheasants are killed at short range, and come down shattered or maimed. Then the cripples picked up by the keepers next day have been deteriorating through a long night of thirst and agony. Independently of considerations of the palate, nothing is more disagreeable or unsightly when carving, than to come upon thighs hanging by ligatures, and on wings and breasts suffused with blood. Indeed, the cooks might say, '*Vive le braconnier*,' for no systems of killing are so satisfactory as snaring or dropping point blank with an air cane.

When the pheasant first made his reputation in France, neither preserving nor regular *battues* had been dreamed of. Nor yet in those days did the restaurant exist. He was forwarded to the royal palaces or the hôtel of monseigneur by the keepers who ranged the rides in limitless forests, and nearly as often, we dare to say, by the poachers. The Grand Monarch, who did everything on a magnificent scale, had pheasant covers of his own around Versailles, Marly, and St. Cloud. The French nation had little reason to bless his memory, but it must be said to his credit that he was the founder and munificent patron of the intelligent school of French cookery. Like

the monarchs of the House of Hanover, he enjoyed a portentous appetite, and he grudged no means of gratifying it. His starving subjects, who saw him dining in public on the terrace, admired his powers as they envied his opportunites. Dumas sketches him admirably in the 'Vicomte de Bragelonne,' where he is delighted with the natural gifts of Porthos, Seigneur de Bracieux. He sends down special dishes to the gigantic musketeer from his own upper table, a pheasant among the other things, and asks flatteringly intelligent questions as to the dishes which Porthos approved. It is an historical fact that the pheasant was the favourite of the great king. His palate was as fastidious as his appetite was large, and though he loved to trifle with ortolans or beccaficos, his serious affections were on more solid fare. He set a fashion in pheasants, and his successors and their courtiers developed it. The pheasant became the *plat de prédilection* at the famous suppers of the Palais Royal during the Regency. The Regent, who was an enthusiast in chemistry, did not confine his researches and experiments to the retorts and crucibles in the laboratory. He was not content with calling up his *chef* to discuss his *menus*, but would descend to the kitchen for more intimate consultations. Under his reckless *régime*, and when Law was blowing

his South Sea bubbles, the taste for cookery became not only a fashion but a rage. Louis XIV. had left the finances in dire confusion. The national distress was the opportunity of individuals. The old noblesse, drawn from its domains to the Court, had been well-nigh ruined in the race of extravagance. The financiers and farmers-general had come to the front. They had none of the refinement of the lavish Fouquet, and as little of the frugality of his supplanter Colbert. They had to assert a place in society by vulgar ostentation. They were much given to marrying well-born wives, and the ill-matched spouses were mutually unfaithful. The financiers, almost to a man, had their *petites maisons* and their mistresses, as well as their magnificently furnished hotels. For the most part they kept up double establishments of cooks, and they vied with each other in repasts which were modelled on the Roman profusion. But there were enthusiastic *chefs* cherishing the traditions of Vatel, who had committed suicide precipitately on a point of honour. When they had talent or showed fair promise, they never wanted an engagement nor the means of prosecuting their studies, for as they were the surest stepping-stones of their employers, they had literally *carte blanche*. And we get an idea of the resources of their culinary genius from the story told by Hayward

in 'The Art of Dining,' of Bertrand, the artiste of the Prince de Soubise. The *chef* had presented the *menu* for a supper, and one of the items was fifty hams. Naturally the Prince objected, and protested that he did not mean to feast his regiment. The wounded *chef* exclaimed with dignity, 'Monseigneur, you do not understand our resources. Give the word, and those fifty hams which astound you shall be put into a bottle no bigger than my thumb.' Then he condescended to explain, that forty-nine of the hams had been used for stock, dressings, or sauces.

The story gives a good idea of the way in which the cooks of the financiers went to work. From their day the pheasant ceased to be a simple *rôti*, to be simmered down into a *purée*, or to be sent up smothered in truffles. Their ingenuity devised, more or less in the rough, many of the elaborate refinements in way of *entrées* which have now become common-places of the cookery books. Louis XV. did not let the practice of the little suppers languish. It was he, or his boon companion Richelieu, who used to gravitate between the Bastille and Versailles, who is said to have invented the flying tables, although, indeed, the idea was borrowed from the Romans. These tables had the obvious advantage of dispensing with the presence of embarrassing servants, and they

soon came to be doubly appreciated as establishing swift communications with the subterraneous fires. It must have chilled the ardour of any *rôtisseur* to know that the game, done to a turn, was to be cooled in the passage through interminable corridors; now the tinkle of a silver bell demanded the change of the courses; and the *chef* who respected himself often kept his master waiting. He felt that the cook must be superior to the caprices of amorous dalliance or frivolous talk; and, on the other hand, on the perfection of his repasts he knew that he staked his character and fortunes.

The Revolution reversed everything, and the lines of the French *chefs* fell in uncongenial places when they followed the ruined *émigrés* to Coblenz and elsewhere. Yet some of those who stayed at home found occupation, and others who had emigrated were soon tempted to return. For, strange to say, the troubles of the Revolution were the birth-time of those Parisian *restaurateurs* who have made themselves a world-wide notoriety. It is said that the reaction from intense excitement brings factitious cravings; and we know from Boccaccio and the records of the Plagues that men who despair of the morrow do their best to live in the day. It is certain that Beauvilliers established his famous restaurant when the prisons of Paris were

being filled to overflowing, and when the tumbrils, with their melancholy loads, were continually jolting to the guillotines. Beauvilliers was a genius in his way, and was epicurean in the interests of others, who rose serenely superior to passing incidents. He must have brought a wonderful brain to his business, and his speculations succeeded beyond all expectation. Had he succumbed to the terrors and anxieties of the time, the popularisation of high cookery might have been delayed indefinitely. As it was, his new establishment attracted appreciative guests, and its master had soon a host of imitators. But Beauvilliers, while he lived, could hold his own, as he did hold it through the wars of the Empire to the Restoration. Like old M. Pascal at Philippe's in the Rue Mont Orgueil, he had a marvellous memory for faces, and professed a seductive sympathy with the tastes of his guests. As Brillat-Savarin remarked, he would walk from table to table, suggesting special dishes and wines with a charm there was no resisting. When the bill came up, the tempter had disappeared, and the party had their *mauvais quart d'heure* all the same. To such an eminently practical host the Revolution was an unmixed blessing in more ways than one. It filled his cellars and larders as well as his *salons*; he bought cheap and sold dear. When the *châteaux*

were pillaged and wrecked there were forced sales of the wines; when the domains of the aristocrats were put up to public auction, the *gardes-chasse* were sent into involuntary retreat, and the peasants had the run of the woods. Pheasants and partridges poured into the capital, and Beauvilliers, when he wrote his 'L'Art du Cuisinier'—which does due honour to the pheasant—shows that he had taken advantage of his opportunities. Yet the great man had reason to lament the ingratitude of his compatriots, and he lived to see himself eclipsed by his younger rival Véry. At least, it was Véry who contracted to furnish the tables of the allied sovereigns when they paid their unwelcome visit to Paris in 1814. Brillat-Savarin is eloquent in his praise of Beauvilliers' great work. He says that it bears the stamp of enlightened practice, and was a treasury of original and ingenious research, to which all subsequent writers have been indebted for materials.

Until things settled down under the Restoration, the *restaurateurs* enjoyed a monopoly of the best Parisian cooking. Even when the French nobles had come back with their diminished fortunes they could not afford to give high salaries, and indeed they seldom entertained. There were no longer Marshals who were expected to lavish their pay and appointments in the service of the Empire, though personally,

like Junot or Murat, they might have preferred a *bon petit plat canaille.* There was no longer a zealous gourmand like Cambacérès, the grand chancellor, who officially and vicariously entertained with *carte blanche* from his master. The best Parisian cooks went a-begging, and were snapped up by wealthy Englishmen, or occasionally transported to Russia. When the Sovereigns were entertained by the members of aristocratic White's at Devonshire House, Talleyrand and the French connoisseurs were *en pays de connaissance*, for the *salmis* and *coulis* of English pheasants had been dressed by illustrious French artists. The price per head for the banqueting was absurd and ruinous; but it was far surpassed, by the way, by a bet decided shortly afterwards at the same club, which is mentioned specially in the magnificent volumes brought out by Mr. Algernon Bourke. The member who devised the most costly dish was to escape scot free at a feast of the most extravagant combinations. Lord Alvanley, who was triply famous as a wit, a bold rider in the shires and a *bon vivant*, won with a collection of rare and elegant extracts, in which the oysters of pheasants figured conspicuously.

The Parisian restaurants had engaged the highest talent and set the fashion of intelligent experiment and research to the provinces and the other capitals.

The cooks who graduated in their kitchens disseminated science all over Europe. But the Parisian *magasins de comestibles* were still more characteristic. In London there were houses, like the old Ship and Turtle in Leadenhall Street, lately transmogrified and restored, which were unrivalled for solid specialities. The turtles in the cellars and tanks of that establishment were a sight to see, and we fancy nothing in Ascension or the Bahamas could equal it. But there was no attempt at ornamental advertising, and there was no display in the windows to indicate the gastronomic luxuries within; whereas the artistically grouped trophies of game in the windows of Chevet or Potel, in which the pheasants hung glittering like golden stars in the radiance of their gorgeous plumage, doubtless suggested subjects for *La Gourmandise* of Eugène Sue, and might have tempted an anchorite to give generous orders.

But these magazines of game are but the antechambers of the kitchen, and although a *catalogue raisonné* of receipts may be rather dull, we must go on to say something of actual cookery. There is nothing better to a man of fairly healthy appetite than its simplest form, and naturally we begin with roasting. Felix Graham after all made no great discovery when in 'Orley Farm' he told the worthy

Mrs. Baker that eating a pheasant after dinner is wasting one of the best gifts of Providence, and that a man should have a pheasant all to himself. Both propositions are undeniably sound, but everything depends on the roasting. The cook selects, as a matter of course, the plump young bird that has been properly kept, and then he possesses the material for realising a great though simple inspiration. The *rôtisseur*, like the poet, *nascitur non fit*; there are the instincts of genius in the regulation of the fire which is to bring out the rich and appetising colouring. Look upon this picture and on that. The pheasant, with his gay plumage glittering in the sunshine, may be said to gain and be transfigured in the golden glow of his glorified demise. He melts in a gush of tender sympathy to the slightest incision, and the sweet savour of his virtues and well-spent life goes up into the nostrils of the mourner, who thinks fondly of him when finally disposed of. Nor is there anything better than the natural gravy, and we hold that there is something heterodox in the continental practice of tampering with the native sauce. Delicately browned bread crumbs and potato chips are always suitable accompaniments to low-country game, and as for bread sauce, that has been consecrated by old custom, and with better reason than the sauce of the apple which

custom sanctions for the goose. It is a graceful tribute to the frequenter of the wheat fields, in which he laid on the luscious fat and picked up his staple subsistence. An old gourmand of our acquaintance used always to aver that bread sauce was the best of vegetables. We are far from going so far as that, and though undeniably a good thing, very much depends on the making. Simple as it may sound and seem, its satisfactory projection demands talent scarcely inferior to that of the scientific roaster. As you have it in almost all hotels and too many clubs of the highest pretensions, it tastes not unlike the poultice it resembles. The bread sauce seems to be an English fancy; the pheasant when simply roasted abroad is generally sent up with a service of watercress; or sometimes there is a surrounding of slices of lemon, as lemon is always squeezed into the gravy. The lemon, as we think, comes in better when the bird has been either *piqué* (larded), or *bardé* (enveloped in bacon). Of course in the latter case you strip off the covering, and certainly the *fumet* is not only admirably preserved, but sublimated by the subdued flavour of the pig. We have already spoken our mind as to meritorious sauces, but in no case can we approve of sauce Périgueux. And the crucial test is that though it may commend itself to vitiated palates, there are

invariably ingredients which make it fatal to the bouquet of Burgundies of *haut cru.*

But the sublimest form of art, endeavouring to paint the lily and improve upon nature, is undoubtedly the *faisan à la Sainte-Alliance*, to which we have already alluded. The name indicates the date of introduction in the Parisian restaurants, though for the original idea we are indebted to Brillat-Savarin. He first gives careful instructions as to preparing the bird, and then passes on to directions as to stuffing and dressing. You get a couple of woodcocks—bone them, and separate them into two portions, the one consisting of the flesh, the other of the liver and trails. Then you mince up the flesh with beef mixed with grated bacon, condiments, and fine herbs, and proceed to plug up the intestines with the best truffles. If the bird has been long hung, it is rather difficult to seal up the contents hermetically, which is indispensable to complete success. You spit the pheasant delicately above a broad slice of bread, which is covered with the stuffing of the trail, &c., with pounded truffles, with more grated bacon, an anchovy, and a sufficiency of butter. Then as he roasts before the carefully regulated furnace, he drips and sheds his choicest succulence into bread that is turning to toast. Brillat-Savarin recommends you to serve him surrounded with bitter

oranges, and to rest tranquil as to results. We never chanced to see that accompaniment of oranges, but for long the *Sainte-Alliance* was a *spécialité* of the *Trois Frères Provençaux* in the Palais Royal, an historical house, which, like Philippe's and the Café de Paris, came to grief many years ago for no intelligible reason. There were certain modifications introduced at the *Trois Frères*, but our friend who had such a passion for bread sauce sought in vain to penetrate these secrets, although he was highly esteemed by the chiefs of the house, both as a connoisseur and a liberal patron. And after that triumph of *gourmandise*, it is really an anti-climax to speak of the simple truffle stuffing, though an excellent thing in its way, which can even make the guinea-fowl edible.

I write with reserve about boiling pheasants, because I have a perverse fancy for boiling many things, such, for example, as the legs of mountain mutton, which is a scandal and a stumbling block to cooks and waiters. Nevertheless, I cannot help thinking that to the artistically-minded, boiled pheasant must make a pleasant variation. In defence I plead his kinship to the capon or the chicken, and his sympathetic affinity to celery; though, unlike the canvas-back duck, he has never seen or tasted the vegetable till they have come together on the table.

In boiling, the grand point is never to break the skin, and then a plump young hen, bedded on celery and served with celery sauce, with the faintest dash of the lemon, is a dish for the gods. *Meo arbitrio*, as the Antiquary says of a second-day chicken pie, the thigh in that sense is better than either the breast or wing. But always remember that, as Bailie Jarvie's father the Deacon used to say of a tup's head, the pheasant over-boiled is poison. From thirty to fifty minutes is ample time for all sizes, from the smallest to the biggest. Above all, in making the celery sauce, never forget a sufficiency of rich cream. Roast pheasant with truffles; braised pheasant with chestnuts—these are the formulas. For braising, truss the bird as it were for boiling, and a boiled pheasant must be trussed more elaborately than a roast one. Take bacon, a carrot and shalots, don't forget the celery, select a dozen or so of chestnuts, scalded and strained, add the squeeze of a lemon and a *soupçon* of garlic. Then, as some writers recommend, line the heated stewpan with slices of beef—you may either eat the beef or leave it alone—in any case it adds body to the braising. Fill the pheasant with stuffing flavoured with spices, and, considering the comparative coarseness of the *cuisine*, you may use nutmeg and cayenne almost to *indiscretion*. Do

the pheasant up in well-buttered paper like a mullet, but strip it of the paper before serving, and for appearance's sake let it have another turn or two of the fire. Then, as the Swiss *aubergiste* said to Dumas when serving him the bear that had been supping on a neighbour: *Goûtez-moi ce gaillard-là, et vous m'en direz nouvelles.*

I pass on to glance at some *plats de luxe.* Though bound to notice them, I preface the remarks by protesting against them generally as vicious refinements of a sated civilisation, which will have variety or novelty at any sacrifice. Yet many of them, though sounding luxurious, are really economical, and suggest pretentious or savoury fashions of sending game to the table a second time. In most, of course, the truffle again comes into play; we are tempted by the respective attractions of *salmi*, *suprême*, and *soufflé*; and the simple gravy, limpid as golden sherry, is superseded by the spiced and laden sauce Périgueux, or something resembling it in a pungency which is injurious to the delicacy of the pheasant. The *salmi*, which is simply English for the stew, comes most readily within the compass of commonplace cooks. Yet there are *salmis* and *salmis*, and some are worthy of the talent of a *cordon bleu*; and we remember the famous one which the mendacious Becky Crawley

averred she had prepared with her own hands for her brother-in-law, Mr. Pitt. Whoever made that *réchauffé*, it must have been a good one, and not unworthy of Lord Steyne's White Hermitage, which brought a flush into the pale cheeks of the member for Queen's Crawley. All you have to do is to cut up the cold game neatly ; see that there is something to make an abundance of stock or artificial sauce—fat pork will do well enough, in the absence of anything better—and then add brown sherry and lemon juice to suit the taste. Or should there be half a bottle of claret or Burgundy left over from the dinner of the day before, it will make a most satisfactory substitute for the sherry. For the *soufflé* you pound the pheasant in a mortar, moisten with gravy, season with pepper or spice, and by passing the whole through a fine sieve, deprive the bird of the least particle of its full natural flavour. The *salmi* may want character, and yet be savoury enough ; but the *soufflé* is what the novelists call 'sweetly pretty,' and consequently sadly insipid. Very much more may be done with the *vol-au-vent*, in which sections of the fresh pheasant are inclosed in walls of golden crust, with its native odòurs and savours intermingled with those of truffles, oysters, mushrooms, cockscombs, crayfish, soft roes, and, in fact, anything of the sort you please. When

chefs went in for the castellated and decorated pastry which adorned the tables at state banquets, the contents of the *vol-au-vent* must have sometimes suffered. We are inclined to believe that they are the better, now a more unassuming dish is handed round at the *dîner à la Russe.* As for the *quenelles* and the *boudins*, they explain themselves, and nothing need be said of them, except they make pretty enough ornamental *entrées.* Many connoisseurs have a predilection for the dressing *à la Soubise* ; and there is one recommendation in doing pheasants in that way, for they need not necessarily be young. You truss as for boiling, and then braise in rich stock, with bacon and vegetables. Pheasant *à la St. Cloud* somewhat resembles the *à la Sainte-Alliance*, but the stuffing is less costly. Partridge, hare, or rabbit may be substituted for the snipe, and the chief ingredients are the livers with chopped truffles and fine herbs. Or a sauce *à la Béarnaise* may be substituted for the Soubise, though that excellent concoction of the Provençal cooks, which has been a passion of the Basque gentry from time immemorial, is decidedly too *prononcé* in flavour for white game. The garlic and the sharp vinegar go better with a *bourgeois* dish, such as the *poitrine de mouton*, which has always been a special breakfast *plat de jour* at the Café Voisin, in the

Rue St. Honoré, which, by the way, could boast of the best cellar of Burgundies in Paris before being laid under reckless contribution in the siege by the Germans and the troubles of the Commune.

That suggests a word by way of postscript as to the wines which may best accompany the bird. We are always of the opinion that mixing vintages is a sad mistake, and we know not whether to pity or envy the man who can begin with Chablis and end with old Madeira, without feeling disagreeable consequences next day. The excellent fashion is becoming almost universal among *gourmets*, especially when they have passed the grand climacteric, of sticking to moderately dry champagne from the oysters or *appétisants* to the devilled biscuits. But if ever there is fair excuse for breaking a golden rule it is when the Burgundy cradled in its basket goes round with the pheasant. When you dine on pheasant alone, following the counsels of Felix Graham, of course there can be no mistake about the matter, if a bin of old Burgundy be within reach. Fate can have nothing better in store for the epicure than a pheasant of the Ardennes, with a bottle of the Romanée, Chambertin, or Clos Vougeot, which is the pride of a few of the Belgian châteaux, and is still to be found in one or two old-fashioned hostelries, notably in Liège and Bruges. That wine has

been brought into the Low Countries with the slightest possible disturbance by steamers or barges on the rivers and canals. In England, thanks to the shaking on the railways and the Channel, it is rare indeed to get Burgundy in perfection, for money cannot buy it. Yet as a *pis-aller* good Bordeaux is by no means to be despised. Nay, in Bohemia and Austria, where we have said the pheasants are the best, and, indeed, of surpassing excellence, it is possible to combine enjoyment with economy. Carlowitzer, Ofner &c. of admirable quality are to be had in the most extravagant of the Viennese restaurants for a comparative trifle, and they are a very satisfactory substitute for the vintages of Burgundy or the Gironde. After all, it is safe advice, when in doubt, to play trumps, or in other words, to call for champagne. If you hold to champagne, you can at least be consistent, for it should always be forthcoming at *déjeuners* or ball suppers, and is most suitable to all the cold preparations, such as Chaufroid, Mayonnaise, and Galantine. I have not deemed it necessary to notice these, as the pheasant is treated like the chicken or any other fowl. In dismissing this delicious bird, one can hardly do better than quote the letter of one illustrious divine to another, and both the enthusiasts were sworn apostles of simplicity. This is the last communication from

Sidney Smith to Canon Barham or Thomas Ingoldsby, 'Many thanks, my dear sir, for your kind present of game. If there is a pure and elevated pleasure in this world it is that of roast pheasant and bread sauce; barn-door fowls for dissenters, but for the real churchman, the thirty-nine times articled clerk, the pheasant! the pheasant!'

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